

furono Elmati

By

Mrs. L. C. Ellsworth

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PZ3 Copyright No.

Shelf E 478 F

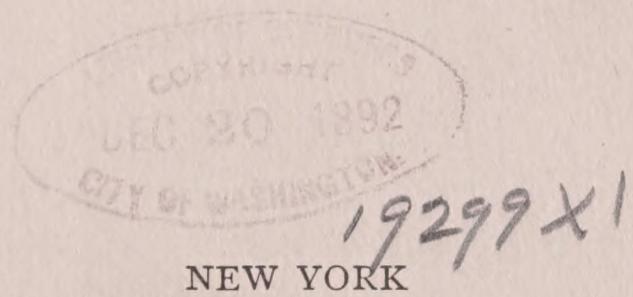
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

FURONO AMATI

FURONO AMATI

A Romance

BY
MRS. L. C. ELLSWORTH
AUTHOR OF "A LITTLE WORLDLING," ETC.



UNITED STATES BOOK COMPANY

5 AND 7 EAST SIXTEENTH STREET

CHICAGO: 266 & 268 WABASH AVE.

(1892)

PZ³
E 418 F

COPYRIGHT, 1892, BY
LOUISE C. ELLSWORTH

[All rights reserved]

In Memoriam

In recollection of a summer's day,
When wind and wave united in a song,
And, aided by a violin's sweet lay,
Lifted my soul beyond the idle throng.

They sang of love, its rapture and its pain;
They sang of passion and its vain regret.
Into these pages came the tender strain,
And here within, the echo lingers yet.

An artist's masterpiece; a woman's soul;
Amati both, and *they were loved*, too well;
And both too fine for unskilled hand's control,
Such is the tale it was my task to tell.

L. C. E.

FURONO AMATI.

I.

THE air is quivering with heat, for the sun beats down with relentless fierceness upon the asphalt pathways, the dried-up fountain and the seared foliage of Madison Square.

Here and there little heaps of curled-up leaves, brown and brittle, have been swept against the margins of the lawns, and among them, close to a bench, is curled up a little heap of humanity, brown as the leaves, and well-nigh as crumpled and forlorn of aspect as the piles of dusty foliage around him.

He is fast asleep. His glossy black head, from which the remnants of an old felt hat have dropped

away, rests upon the hard side of a boot-blacking kit, while the straight classic lines of his face—infantile, but full of character—are protected from the scorching sun by the shade of the bench near which he has sought shelter.

As closely as his fears of the ubiquitous “cop” would permit, he has crept to the edge of the soft lawn, admonished by the sign-posts, which—he has just sufficient knowledge of English to understand—warn him to “keep off the grass.”

Even in his slumber, his young face, with its creamy complexion stained a deep yellow by the golden sunshine of fair Italy, wears a frown of discontent, and the pomegranater-ed lips, curved like cupid’s bow, are drawn into a pout, half of anger, half of contempt. In his homesick little heart he despises the pretensions of the short, sparse blades of grass, and the general scantiness of vegetation, which requires so much protection, from man against man, to save them from extinction. He yearns for the vineyards of his native home; he craves to bury himself in the soft,

fragrant herbage of the *Campagna*, or to lave his limbs and aching feet in the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean.

His clothes are tattered ; his bare ankles begrimed with dust ; but, somehow, the unconscious grace of his pose robs his aspect of vulgarity, and many of the passers-by—especially the female portion—throw kindly, compassionate glances at “the poor little fellow ; worn out by the heat.”

But not in every breast did his forlorn condition kindle the gentle spark of humanity. The spirit of mischief, if not of malice, lurked in the twinkle of a pair of pale blue eyes, that espied him from afar. The flutter of a skimpy calico skirt ; a rapid kick from a stringless shoe ; a shrill voice, yelling : “Cheese it, the cop !” and the sleeper’s siesta comes to an abrupt end.

The scowl deepens into an expression of fury and hatred.

“*Bestia !*” he mutters, as he eyes the girl, who has retreated to a safe distance, whence she waves an armful of newspapers at him, while one thin

dirty hand pushes back the wisps of red hair, which the perspiration has glued to her freckled cheeks.

“ Hey, Bambo ! ” continues the shrewish voice, “ up wid yeas, ye lazy dago ! Be about yer biz, or yer mother will shine yer back fur yeas ! —Evenin’ Teligram, sur, Mail ‘n Express ! all the evenin’ pap’s, sur ! ”

The latter part of her speech in a changed key, as she pursues a prospective customer down the path.

Bambo despairs to take further notice of “ Irish Lizzie,” as she is known to his small fraternity. He stretches his attenuated limbs lazily into the pathway, unwilling to give up his *dolce far niente* just yet. His features do not relax, for it must be confessed that the frown of discontent is rather habitual with him; for this small atom of humanity cherishes a bitter resentment against the existing order—or rather, disorder—of affairs mundane.

Why some should have all that is desirable in this world, money, clothes, delicacies, and, above all, music, and others must go starving in body and

soul, is an enigma which he meets with rebellion, since he cannot solve it.

In the past—for Bambo already imagines that he has a past—it had not troubled him at all that he was poor; for Italy, the fair, covers even indigence with so much brilliancy of color; breathes upon naked limbs with such genial warmth, smiles with such radiance upon rags, as though they were rather amusing circumstances, that one forgets to look upon them as misfortunes. But here, in this strange, solemn country, where human hearts seemed well-nigh as hard or as heavy as the stones in its endless rows of houses and pavements, Bambo had learned to fear, if not to understand, the cruelty of Life to most of her children.

In his native land he had lived in a fisherman's hovel; but it was vine-clad and fragrant with herbs; and there were figs and purple grapes, and olives, as a relish after one's meal of bread and fish; and as to being clad in a coarse shirt and patched trowsers, what of that? if one's neighbors wore no better!

Here it was different ; horridly different. There was still the coarse bread and the ragged attire, but where were the jests and the merry laughter ?

Bambo's father, allured by deceptive visions of bettering his condition, had transplanted his small family, consisting of himself, the wife and the "bambino," to this new world, where his poverty and ignorance had soon been shorn of their picturesque draperies. In a miserable, overcrowded tenement, in the reeking atmosphere of a squalid downtown quarter, he had sickened and died, from homesickness and disappointment. His wife and little son—the "bambino," now no longer, for half in tenderness, half in derision that designation had been shortened into "Bambo"—were less fortunate, in that a tougher constitution or a greater degree of adaptability enabled them to continue to exist, under increased hardships, and they struggled on ; the mother in dumb brute-like resignation, the boy in seething but suppressed rebellion against fate.

Having some slightly superior skill with the needle, the woman eked out a livelihood by making

and mending the garments of her compatriots in the quarter where she lived. A small room with a large closet attached, which served Bambo for his private apartment, comprised their home. But it was meet that the boy, now in his ninth year, should contribute his share to the support of the household, and so *la madre*, with a sigh born of reminiscence of long ago, sold the violin of her husband, to purchase a boot-blacking outfit for her son, and sent him on his daily errands, first under guidance of an elder boy, but latterly entirely dependent upon his own devices.

Bambo carried no enthusiasm into his new vocation. He would have much preferred to wander about with the fiddle, but the ruling powers frowned upon his gaining his daily bread by "begging," and so he had to submit to the inevitable, which he did with no good grace whatever, it must be admitted.

Just as soon as a few nickels had been garnered to propitiate maternal exaction, Bambo loved to indulge himself in brooding over the perversity of circumstances, or entering into vague scheming for

means to improve his condition. He had singularly little of the light-hearted buoyancy of his countrymen, but rather more than his share of their fierce impulsiveness and sudden outbursts of temper. Perhaps this was the outcome of the state of growing discontent in his father's mind, during the period to which Bambo owed his existence. Of the first three or four years of his life in his sunny southern home, Bambo cherished a half visionary recollection, magnified into a mirage of unalloyed delight by the misery and homesickness that had come after, and in his day-dreams it was always to Italy that he returned, to live in a vine-clad bower, surrounded by strains of sweet music, midst sunshine and merry voices.

“ Irish Lizzie ” was soon forgotten, as, preparing himself to indulge in a spell of his favorite musing, he rolled over luxuriously, stretching out his feet into the pathway. But he drew them in again, quickly, with a sharp cry of pain : “ *Cospetto di——!* ”

The oath died upon his lips, and the long lids

lifted, and parted widely over his great, dark, Italian eyes ; gazing with startled amazement upon the seraphic apparition of a little girl, arrayed in white draperies and gay colored ribbons.

She was bending over him, her face aglow with exercise and quick emotion ; the liquid blue eyes full of sweet contrition. Bambo almost forgot the stinging pain in his toe, caused by the sharp heel of her little French boot, while he observed admiringly the golden halo of curls that framed her fair forehead.

“ Did I hurt you much ? Oh, I am so sorry ! But you put out your feet so suddenly, and I was running and could not stop myself.”

No answer ; for Bambo, between pain and bliss could not utter a word. Such music as her voice, he thought, he had never heard before, except perhaps in a dream of angels.

The little girl, half abashed by the intensity of his gaze, bent lower to examine the injured foot. A drop of dark red blood oozed slowly from the bruised toe.

With a quick exclamation of distress the little one dropped on her knees.

"Oh, poor boy! I made it bleed! What can I do? Let me tie it up with my handkerchief, and then you must go home and ask your mamma to bathe it with Pond's Extract."

Bambo let her twist the bit of lace around the bruised member, watching her with breathless surprise, but offering no resistance.

"Mademoiselle Isabel! *Mon Dieu!* What are you doing there? Leave the dirty boy alone, this instant!" and a French "bonne" in white cap and apron fluttered down upon them like a ruffled hen.

"I stepped on his toe, Fifine, and hurt him, oh, so badly!"

The blue eyes, full of tender pity, were raised to the face of her nurse, pleadingly, but Fifine knew her duty, and began dragging her young charge away.

"*Grand Dieu!* But it is a ragamuffin! You will catch the—the contagion!"

Isabel had to submit to superior strength ; but she cast regretful glances behind.

"Good-bye, little boy !" she cried ; "I am so sorry ! I hope it will soon get well !"

Bambo regarded her in continued silence, following her with his eyes until her fluttering garments disappeared from view, then he drew a long breath, and shook himself, as if to dispel an illusion.

Then he looked at his toe. There was the tiny lace handkerchief, proof positive that he had not been dreaming. Slowly he raised himself to a sitting posture, keeping his eyes upon the bit of trimmed lawn as though it were a gem. Softly he touched it with his fingers ; then he unwound it and held it gingerly in his hand : the sweet perfume of violets caressed his nostrils, but it bore an ugly red blood stain in its midst.

Bambo looked about him stealthily, as if he were going to commit a theft. Then, quickly, he thrust the handkerchief into the front of his gingham shirt, and sprang to his feet. He snatched up his kit of tools and tramped homeward scarcely conscious of the pain in his toe.

With a new perception of the entire repulsiveness of the dirt and squalor around him, he picked his way through the groups of unkempt and neglected children of the Italian quarter, answering an occasional recognition with a short grunt, or disdaining altogether to take notice of it. His acquaintances were used to his taciturn ways and gave themselves little concern about him, in their turn. If he chose to keep himself aloof, they cared not a rap ; *basta !*

Arrived within the confines of his humble home, a sweltering room, scanty of dimensions and still more scanty of furnishings, he threw his kit into a corner, searching his pocket for the day's earnings. He handed the few coins to his mother, a sallow, sharp-visaged woman, with eyes like a gentle cow's, and probably with as little development of intellect, and then devoted his attention, somewhat wearily to the evening meal, a sort of stew with a predominant flavor of garlic. A piece of white bread formed his *entremets* and dessert.

His mother had returned to a piece of work

which his coming had interrupted; utilizing the waning light to sew on some last buttons. Bambo regarded her for a few moments through his fingers, as he sat supporting his head with his hand. Then his glance wandered down to his bruised toe, and a cynical, unchildlike smile flitted over his dusky face.

“Ask your mamma to bathe it with——” he did not remember what remedy the girl had recommended; no matter, his mother was doubtless quite as ignorant of it. At home, in the *Campagna*, she might have known of some cooling and healing herb. A dull, homesick sigh rose to the boy’s lips and escaped in almost a sob. His mother looked at him over her work.

“*Ch’avete, Bambo?*” she asked, not unkindly. They always spoke in their native language when alone, though both had acquired enough knowledge of English to get on with; Bambo rather more, with the ready adaptability of childhood.

“It is nothing. The sun made my head ache.” Not for the world would he have told of his ad-

venture to any one, not even to his mother. They were not given to confidences, these two. The woman bore her hard lot with a calm stolidity that had a touch of pride, and Bambo knew from experience that he could expect little sympathy, if indeed any understanding from her in the perplexities and rebellion of his youthful brain. He rose and entered the small recess, where a straw pallet on a stretcher, a rickety stool with a tin basin, and a dilapidated leather trunk comprised all he could survey as proprietor.

Here the air was still more stifling; only a small aperture—a window opening into an adjoining room, high up above the foot of Bambo's couch—admitted scanty ventilation when the door was closed. This adjoining apartment had been unoccupied for some time, to Bambo's great satisfaction, for he resented being crowded by his fellow-men; therefore he noted with displeasure on this evening, that some one was moving about on the other side of the wall. A match was struck and a momentary illumination followed. In a few

seconds it died away and the odor of tobacco proclaimed that the new occupant of the room was enjoying a smoke ; an additional grievance to Bambo, who objected to the intrusion of the tobacco-fumes, which made the atmosphere still more close in his closet.

He pushed the door into the sitting-room wide open, to admit more air. His mother had gone to deliver the finished garment, and would probably spend some time gossiping.

With a feeling of relief at being alone, the boy threw himself on his bed, first divesting himself of all superfluous clothing. As he drew off his shirt, the little handkerchief dropped from its hiding-place. Faintly the odor of violets mingled with that of the tobacco. Bambo snatched up the cloth eagerly, and threw himself on his back, spreading the little patch of lace over his perspiring face. It seemed to carry a luxurious sensation of refreshment to his confused mind. Soon he was lost in the deep meditations which absorbed so many hours which his mother believed devoted

to sleep ; as if one could sleep in such a suffocating hole !

But if it were hot, he was at least alone there, this small misanthrope, who shunned his kind. He would rather smother there, than mingle in the noisy, quarrelsome companionship of the streets. But a strange, new element entered his musings on this night ; almost like a touch of celestial light. Could it be that there was some truth, after all, in what the priests talked about, and that there was a place, somewhere, set apart for beings brighter and—and *cleaner* than all the rest ? Clean like the snow when it first fell from the sky ?

Bambo's mother had preserved some of the instincts of people who live on the borders of great bodies of water, and even in her curtailed surroundings, adhered to the traditions of periodical ablutions. But Bambo had much of the lazy indifference of the street-Arab in regard to cleanliness, and associated the bath with Sunday, or a *festa* ; a necessary evil to be evaded if possible.

Still, an innate love of the beautiful caused him to appreciate the effects of a good washing—when it was over and done with! And now he jumped suddenly from his reclining position, carried his tin basin to the sink in the corner of the sitting-room and began a most vigorous scrubbing.

“*Santa Maria!* Has the boy gone mad from sunstroke?” exclaimed his mother on her return, for a small inundation was spreading through the room.

“It was so hot, *Madre mia,*” apologized Bambo, retreating to his lair, shamefacedly, but with a feeling of being clothed in a purity finer than purple and fine linen.

A singular excitement pulsed in his veins; a drowsy sort of intoxication, and he felt himself dropping into sleep, when suddenly a soft, soughing sound crept through his chamber—if a mere closet deserve such a name.

An undefined melody at first, like the low singing of a beautiful voice, growing stronger and gaining in sweetness until Bambo held his breath,

in an ecstasy of surprise and delight, and then arose its harmony divine, from soft whisperings to throbbing, passionate appeal; then burst into triumphant pæans of victory, melodious rejoicing; then sank again to murmurs of content, sighing its breath away, as in expiring throes of passion.

The boy lay as in a trance, not daring to move, lest the heavenly harmony should vanish at his first motion. Even when all was still, he lay listening to the echoes in his brain.

Some one coughed in the next room. Bambo sat up. Could it be that this wondrous music had been produced by the new lodger? Then he must be a great artist, or perhaps a magician! Dragging the stool under the opening into his neighbor's apartment, Bambo climbed up stealthily to take a peep at him; but though he could see a moving shadow, the room was too dark to permit him to distinguish its occupant plainly. Trifling as his weight might be, his frail support creaked ominously, and his fingers ached from clinging to the rough wooden frame. His breath came in audible

pants, and the shadowy figure stood still, as if to listen. A dread of being discovered overcame the boy; he relaxed his grip, and, accompanied by considerable noise, he tumbled backward upon his couch. For a while he lay and listened, but nothing came of it, and little by little his tension of mind relaxed; fatigue gained the mastery and he fell into the heavy sleep of boyhood.

His mother had no little difficulty in arousing him for his day's labors the next morning, and when he tumbled from his pallet into his clothes, Bambo felt inclined to believe that his confused memories of beautiful sounds and the vision of a fair girl, were the creations of his dreams.

During his meagre breakfast he strove to separate reality from imagination, but his glance fell upon his bare toes—for shoes were irksome as well as an extravagance in hot weather—and there was the evidence, in the shape of an ugly bruise, that his adventure of the previous day, at least, was not imaginary; and again it assumed the importance of an episode that was to lead him, like a red

cord, through the labyrinth of his future to the bitter end.

He finished his meal abruptly, returning to his closet, where he searched eagerly, until he found, crushed into the straw of his pallet, the little handkerchief; alas, bereft now of much of its pristine freshness. Covertly he carried it to the window to examine it for a mark of identification. But no clue to its former owner's name was visible.

“Isabel,” the nurse had called her; that must suffice him. Bambo felt keenly disappointed. Why he should care to find the girl again, he himself could not have explained. He hated girls in general—the genus girl of which “Irish Lizzie” was a specimen—and regarded them with the usual lofty contempt of the male of his age. But there was something about *this* girl that set her apart for all time. Not that her clothes and manners were superior—he had often watched the young aristocrats of the Square at their play—but that she had treated him as an equal, him whom

most of her kind shunned and avoided ; with drawing aside of their garments, and haughty bearing.

Somehow she had come like a whiff of sweet cool air into the heat of the summer's day. He wanted to see her again, to repeat the sensation she had given him, and he planned deliberately to bring it about. He would ask his mother to wash the handkerchief, and restore it to its proper shape. Then he would watch for the child in the Square, and under the pretext of returning to her what was hers, he would make her speak to him once more.

An unaccountable shyness seized upon him, however, when he turned to his mother to proffer his request, and he could not frame his petition.

"What ails you, Bambo ?" the woman asked again ; this time a little sharply. "You will miss your patrons on their way to business, if you linger about so long."

The boy crumpled the cloth in his hands quickly, to hide it from her, and reached for his kit of

tools. Then he started for his day's task with sudden energy, determined to gather his customary pittance as speedily as possible, in order to have more leisure to look for his new acquaintance in the Square. He could not return the handkerchief to her in its present condition; that he felt, but he would try to see her from afar, anyhow.

The day brought him, however, only disappointment. He watched and waited in vain, traversing the paths of Madison Square and following every fluttering white skirt of playing children until sunset, when with an increased sense of grievance against fate, and but a scanty supply of nickels in his pocket, he returned to the maternal roof.

He felt no hunger and pushed his supper from him untasted. His mother looked, with dawning anxiety, first upon the untouched viands, then into the scowling face of her offspring.

Was the boy going to be ill? God forbid! illness meant doctors and increased expense; or perhaps the hospital.

Madre de Dio! Her fingers were rough with the

pricks of the needle, and hardened by manifold toil, but she pushed back the glossy black curls from the boy's forehead with a maternal gentleness of touch.

"If the heat tires you so much," she said, "you had better stay at home and rest, to-morrow."

But Bambo met her solicitude with a grunt of impatience.

"It is nothing," he muttered. Then he went into his closet and stretched himself on the cot.

Suddenly he recollected the music of the previous night. Somehow he had associated the sounds with the child Isabel, and had lost sight of them as a separate occurrence. Now all at once it flashed upon him, with a feeling of joy, that if the music had been produced by the lodger in the next room, there was a chance that he might hear it again. He strained his ears to listen; but not the slightest movement was audible in the adjoining apartment, and after a while sleep overcame the boy. He did not know how long his slumbers had lasted when he was recalled to wakefulness

by the magic melody which again seemed to fill the wretched hole where he lay.

Bambo sat up, rubbing his eyes hard, from the startled perception that he was no longer in utter darkness. It took him some time to realize that the light entered through the little open window, over the foot of his couch. Stealthily he got up; but the music would have drowned any noise produced by his careful motion. Again he fixed the stool between his bed and the wall, and standing upon tiptoe, lifted himself with his hands to the edge of the aperture.

He had full opportunity, this time, for observation. His first impression was of a dazzling brightness. The room had evidently just received a fresh coat of whitewash, and the walls were unrelieved by pictures or other ornaments. A kerosene lamp burned on a plain deal table, bare of covering, but white as snow, from scouring. A tin coffee-pot and an earthenware cup and saucer stood beside a loaf of rye bread and a little dab of butter on a wooden plate; evidently the remnants of the occupant's frugal supper.

Within the radiance of the light, but turning his back toward it, sat a broad-shouldered man of generous proportions ; muscular, blond-bearded ; his burly limbs stretched far apart in front of him. In his arms he held, as with a loving clasp, the golden-brown body of a violin. His head bent caressingly upon it as he drew its music with the touches of the bow.

Bambo could only see the man's profile, but the outlines of the leonine head, the robust figure, and general neatness of attire, coarse as it was—consisting of a blue cotton blouse and dun-colored trowsers—plainly bespoke his Teutonic nationality.

Something of contemptuous disenchantment stole into the dusky face of the little Italian, and raised the curves of his Cupid-mouth at the corners.

“ *Un Tedesco*,” “a Dutchman,” as he was accustomed to hear the sons of the German race designated. And *he* could make the little dark instrument sing like that? Just to listen how it spoke! Coaxing, caressing, beguiling! Now swelling with passionate demand, now bursting

into the triumph of achievement. Mother of God! It was alive! It was a celestial spirit, imprisoned in that narrow case, and held captive by the German giant!

Bambo's fingers grew numb with their clutch upon the window-sill; his limbs had gone to sleep under his weight, but he felt nothing, cared for nothing, so long as the glorious cadences, the magic thrills that ran in electric ripples through his nerves, continued. But suddenly, in the midst of a plaintive prayer, wordless as it was, still, so touching that the tears welled up under the boy's eyelids, the strain broke off, leaving the last note moaning upon the air like a wail of sorrow. At the same moment, cramped and stiff in all his joints, Bambo dropped from his perch, with a thud like the falling of an over-ripe fruit. The straw bed broke the severity of his fall and he made no outcry, for fear of discovery.

For hours he lay wide awake, curled up like a wildcat in its lair; with a fierce, desperate longing in his savage little breast; the longing to have this

exquisite singing instrument for his own ; to hold it in his arms, this brown beauty ; to draw from it with his caressing fingers the music that had awakened while it enslaved his soul.

A singular phase of existence now opened before this little transplanted sunflower. More than ever silent and shy, even with his mother, he treated the associates of his own age with repelling gruffness, until they shunned him, or followed him with jeers—half mockery, half superstitious fear—warning each other against the *jetta tura*, the evil eye, until he turned upon them and drove them to flight.

Devoured by a heart-hunger for which he had no name, he spent his days in fruitless endeavor to find the little girl who had first wounded and then bandaged his toe, and his evenings in an agony of rapture, listening to the music produced by his neighbor.

But of the child, whose kindly compassion had fallen like balm upon the roughness of his life, he did not find a trace. No doubt she belonged to

people of wealth, who had sojourned at one of the great hotels that border the square ; and she had vanished from the scene as suddenly as she had appeared to him. Her image had become to the boy as merged into the exquisite voice of the singing violin ; for had not both come to him on the same memorable day ?

He accorded to the instrument a distinct and separate individuality from that of the master under whose touch it seemed to become instinct with life and soul. And what was he, but the stern jailer, who held this impulsive, mysterious being in his thrall, calling forth her protests or responses at his will.

Bambo had asked no questions in regard to him, but he had learned all about the new lodger within a short time, from the gossips that paid neighborly calls to his mother.

He was a German, a carpenter by trade, who worked at odd jobs at his calling, in an independent sort of a way. He was surmised to be sufficiently provided with the necessities of life, though

he lived frugally like his neighbors, for he had been known to bestow a copper, once or twice, upon some small urchin, who met him in the hall or on the stairs. And he could boast of a Sunday suit, old-fashioned and not fitting too well, still perfectly neat and respectable, which he donned on Sunday afternoons, and on one evening in the week, Wednesdays, when he did not come home until after eleven o'clock, and was supposed to have attended a club of his compatriots. But as he always carried his violin with him on these occasions, the club must have been of a more peaceful purpose than the hatching of anarchistical plots.

Once Bambo had met him on his way, and a big brown hand had dropped lightly upon his curly black hair, for a moment. The boy thrilled under the touch—for was it not the hand that controlled the voice?—but he had also resented the familiarity, and shaken himself loose, surly enough.

But night after night—except Wednesdays, when all the world was as a blank to Bambo—he clung to his perch at the window, in the dark, lis-

tening to the tones that filled him with rapture and longing. He had supplemented the stool with an empty soap-box, and enjoyed his lofty though precarious position with some degree of comfort. On one or two occasions he mistrusted that the player had observed him, for he turned his head in the direction of the window. Bambo had shrunk out of sight in a twinkling and the music went on as if the German had taken no heed.

But at last came an eventful evening, when the sad and plaintive strains overcame the responsive heart of the little listener, and a sob of passionate sympathy burst from his quivering lips. In an instant the playing ceased and the German stood close before the window, looking straight into the face of the boy ; for he was a man of gigantic stature and towered within close proximity of the low ceiling.

“ What art thou sobbing about, little fellow ? What ails thee ? ” A deep sonorous voice with the German inflection addressed Bambo. But the boy disappeared like a squirrel into its hole, and

cowered breathless with dismay and self-reproaches. He was more accustomed to kicks from the grown-up brutes of the human race, than kindly words, and he doubted not that this big, strong laborer would give him a sound drubbing for spying into his privacy. He looked formidable enough to the puny lad, frail and slender as a reed, though with the supple grace of an Italian greyhound.

A few minutes later there came a loud knock at the door, and the deep voice asked permission of Bambo's mother to enter. The Italian woman stared and held back a little suspiciously, but the German set her right with a few good-natured remarks about being neighborly.

"You are a clever needle-woman, I am told," he continued, "and if you won't mind taking another customer, I think I can give you a job, now and then."

The acquaintance being thus put on a business basis, the woman no longer objected, and hospitably invited him to be seated.

Bambo, with a hidden consciousness that the

German's visit had a close connection with his own misdeed, kept out of sight as long as he could, and when called forth by his mother, refused tacitly to admit the new comer to closer intimacy. But Master Christopher, as he announced his name to be, bided his time, and then went straight to the mark.

"So you like my violin? you young rascal. Then why don't you come to me when I play, instead of sitting on the window-sill, like a cat?"

Bambo would fain have slunk back into his closet. He felt as if a rude finger had been pressed upon a hidden, sacred spot in his soul; but the carpenter had taken a firm grip on his shoulder, and the "young rascal" was bestowed so kindly that it sounded more like commendation than reproof.

"I don't generally like to have an audience when I am alone with my sweetheart," he continued, "but you might better sit on a chair like a Christian, than climb into the window, like a wild animal in a tree-top."

Bambo's mother looked greatly disturbed by the discovery of her offspring's indiscretion, and would have entered upon a reprimand, but Christopher laughed her anger to naught in his easy, hearty manner, and then he went to fetch his instrument, to the boy's unutterable delight.

Christopher began to play a simple ditty, such as he thought would please the Italian woman, but Bambo jumped at him impulsively.

"Not like that! You hurt her when you play with her like that!"

The German burst into a loud and prolonged guffaw.

"So you are discriminating in your tastes, my little man? Or has this saucy coquette bewitched you, as she does me sometimes? But you are right, sonny, the frivolous carols of the street are not fit for so aristocratic a lady as my Amati! And since you like good music, you shall have plenty of it."

Then he drew his bow softly and lightly over the strings as if to invite the voice to come forth,

causing the notes to swell gradually into the *allegro* of a Beethoven sonata. While playing, he watched the boy closely. He observed the waves of emotion that swept over his pale olive face, with its dark, glowing eyes, under the changing measures of the violin, while Bambo, all forgetful of his surroundings, crept closer and closer until he crouched at the very feet of the musician. At first his long almond-shaped eyes were half shut, emitting a gleam now and then, with a sudden lifting of the curling black lashes of his heavy eyelids. When, under the skillful manipulation of the player, the music changed from a leisurely, graceful *adagio* to the fantastic *capriccioso*, the dark orbs sparkled and opened widely, but when the voice of the instrument arose to an impassioned outburst, he trembled all over with nervous excitement. Again Christopher varied his theme and dropped into a wail, melodious but full of heart-rending despair; and Bambo, his limbs relaxing, threw himself on the floor, face downward to hide his tears.

The German stopped abruptly. "Child," he said, "thou hast the soul of a musician; thou wilt be a great artist some day!"

The Italian woman sat in dumb wonder, half at the music, half at the strange behavior of her son.

"Let him become my pupil," demanded the German. "I will teach him the alphabet of music." From that hour Bambo was the German carpenter's devoted slave. But a severe disappointment awaited him at the very outset of his studies. When he entered Christopher's room the next evening, all palpitating with suppressed exultation, his self-constituted teacher took another violin from a chest of drawers and proceeded to tune it, talking to his pupil about the process the while. Bambo's face fell. He eyed the instrument with visible disfavor. He was not then to hold the brown beauty in his arms?

Christopher's eyes were upon him. They were singularly observing eyes, light blue and clear as crystal, and Bambo felt as if they read his innermost thoughts.

“ Well, what is it, little tree-toad ? ” the German asked with an amused twinkle.

“ You will not let me have her ? ” The boy pointed to the table where the graceful form, which his fingers craved to touch, reposed in her case of ebony.

The carpenter laughed outright.

“ No, my little man, the Amati is too dainty a treasure to be handled by clumsy fingers ; and yours are not over clean in the bargain. You would only make her shriek in disgust. First you must learn to handle your bow, and know one string from the other, ere you can expect to draw anything but discord from the finest instrument. 'Tis a fact too many of us disregard, with violins as well as in other affairs of life ! ”

Bambo’s brows knitted themselves into their habitual frown. He looked at the instrument which the German held out to him half with anger, half with dislike. But Christopher spoke sharply.

“ Don’t be a fool, boy ! —By the way, what do they call you ? ”

“Bambo.”

“Bambo! Bambo *what?* It smacks of a monkey on a hand-organ, and if I mistake not, it means, ‘silly.’ And you have a head such as your great Raffaelle would have liked to paint. What was your father’s name?”

“Tomaso Sanfiero.”

“That’ll do better! I hate ugly names. I shall call you Sanfiero, as is your right. But if you keep that ugly wrinkle between your eyes, you might as well be named Asmodeo. Cheer up, lad! Don’t you want to learn to play the violin? Then get out with you! Quick!”

But Bambo jumped with sudden apprehension.

“I will do what you will!” he cried, eagerly.
“I will learn to touch her!”

“Very well, then,” decided the German practically. “Come here first, and give your hands a scrubbing.”

In the corner of the room stood a big, tin bath-tub, and Christopher looked at the little Italian as if he would like to dump him in altogether, but he

restrained himself, and gave him a generous piece of brown soap and a crash towel. The ablution performed to his satisfaction, he proceeded with the first lesson.

They were a singular pair, this strong, tall German, with his keen, frank glance and the soul of a nightingale, and the slim, brown lad, with his dusky, southern beauty, and a heart full of suppressed stormy passion. But in the weeks that followed, the German took a deep and abiding liking to the waif whom he had taken into his patronage. He had much of the speculative tendencies of the Teuton, mixed with a calm philosophy of his own, that led him to believe that people are what circumstances make of them. He liked to study the workings of the Italian boy's intense and determined character, and tried to give them a turn in the right direction.

Goaded on, as he was, by his desire to advance quickly, so that he might be permitted to handle the Amati, Bambo proved himself a zealous enough scholar to satisfy the most exacting teacher. But

there is, as every one knows, no royal road to mastering the technical difficulties of that most difficult of instruments, the violin ; and his progress, rapid as it might be, failed to keep pace with his ambition.

However, “ playing the fiddle ” was not all that the German taught him. He had put the boy through a searching examination, and found him in almost complete ignorance of every kind of learning except the crude, self-acquired knowledge of reading and cyphering. He set to work immediately, cultivating the luxuriant disorder of the lad’s active brain into something like coherent understanding. But in this, he met with less ready acquiescence from his pupil, who, with the absurd precociousness of the street-Arab, resented this reflection upon his early-ripe experience.

Christopher, however, had a potent medium through which he could stimulate the boy to industrious application ; after a lesson properly attended to, he would reward him with an hour of sweetest strains from the Amati, a privilege for

which Bambo would have gone bodily through fire and water at any time.

These hours of reward gave, at the same time, acutest pleasure and pain to the boy. Lying on his back, his hands folded under his head, as was his favorite position—a remnant of the fashion of his native land that clung to him—he watched the master at play, through the long slit of his half-closed eyelids, while his eyes glowed with a sombre fire.

He adored the music ; he had endued it with an individuality, perceptible to him alone. He loved the little brown body that encased his ideal, as a lover would cherish his mistress, and it filled him with passionate resentment, bordering upon rage, that another than himself should draw forth with his skillful touch the sweetness of the voice which he longed with a jealous heart to have her yield to him alone. And thus the demon of jealousy played with his childish brain as he would with the heart of a man in the presence of a favored rival.

All this might seem very absurd to the descendants of a northern race, in whose veins the blood pulses with mathematical precision ; but in Bambo it was the covert manifestation of his southern birth. Not unlikely that his life-blood was tainted with the lawless propensities of a banditti ancestor, for in his heart throbbed the under-current of seething emotions that reason only with the flash of the stiletto.

His mother, merely a specimen of the "breeder" of her class, saw only that he was silent and morose, and that he held himself aloof from the heterogeneous crowd of Italians, Irish and other imported brood that swarmed in the tenement where they lived.

But then, she thought—when she gave the matter a thought at all—his father had been much the same, loving his fiddle or his gun better than the pick and shovel. She knew that life, the stern schoolmaster, would not be likely to spare the rod to this obstreperous scholar ; and so *la Madre* steadily pursued her sewing ; indeed she had need

to slave over it from morning till night in order to keep body and soul together.

Bambo still continued in his daily duties of boot-blacking, for nickels were in imperative demand. He had done better at his trade of late, than formerly, but his days were but dreams of the evening hours to come, and not unfrequently his fingers curled around the back of his brushes, moving them to some inward rhythm, reproduced by the echoes in his brain.

His search for the little stranger, who had acted the good Samaritan to him, he had abandoned, though at times he glanced around the square involuntarily as if expecting to see her. His absorbing infatuation for the Amati had apparently obscured his recollection of the face of a mere girl.

The German, intent upon his effort to prune some of the wild creepers thrown out by this plant of almost tropical nature, was puzzled at times, but rather amused than otherwise, at the sudden flashes of temper with which the boy would turn upon him, when the chords produced by his bow

were not to Bambo's liking. It did not occur to him however that the lad regarded him with personal envy.

And so this odd couple, the man with the generous heart of a boy, and the boy with the jealous heart of a man, jogged along together as destiny would lead them.

Christopher was a man of frugal habits, and his sturdy arm had never failed him in providing for his necessities; and beyond that he had a Bohemian's disregard for the artificial wants of civilization. He had, as he himself expressed it, been wise enough never to marry. His Amati, he said, was all-sufficient to him as a sweetheart; and much more likely to sympathize with his varying moods than any woman. Besides, he added with a whimsical look in his blue eyes, she was sure to keep silent until asked to speak.

She had come to him in the days of his youth, he once related to Bambo, when, as a journeyman-carpenter, in his native land, he had met with a broken-down musician, who, in return for care and

kindness, had taught him his art, and when death put a stop to his wanderings, had bequeathed his violin to the youth who had stood by him in want and sickness.

Since then the Amati had been Christopher's constant companion. He had the temperament of a true artist, loving music for music's sake, but any proposal to turn his exceptional talent to pecuniary account he repudiated with vigor.

"My music is for myself alone; I do not sell it," he would say. "If you like to listen you are welcome; but when I want your money I will help to build your houses or repair your furniture."

His compatriots regarded him as a mild crank, especially as he would have none of socialist's meetings and reform clubs. His club consisted of a few congenial souls who met over their pipes and pet hobbies, in the back room of a modest German beer saloon, on Wednesday evenings of each week. The German had boasted much of late, before these cronies, of the musical genius whom he had discovered in the little Italian boy; and had prom-

ised to introduce him to them as soon as he could produce something worth listening to.

But work as he would, Bambo's progress was all too slow for his own impatience. He was disposed to lay the blame upon the instrument he used. Such discordant sounds, he thought, as his violin gave forth at times, surely never dwelt in the delicate, glossy frame of the Amati! It was true that his teacher could draw clear, strong notes from the instrument he had given the boy to practise upon, but what were they to compare with the divine voice of his love?

With yearning glances he watched the fingers of his instructor when he manipulated the responsive strings of the Amati. If Christopher would only permit him, he mused angrily, he was sure that he could make her sing for himself also! Oh, for a chance to prove it! What triumph!

But the German was too jealous of his power over her ever to consent to the trial. If he could only snatch her in some unobserved moment, and hold her in his grasp, what bliss!

So pondered Bambo, or Sanfiero, as Christopher invariably called him, and his desire fed upon refusal. His opportunity was long in coming, for the German was careful in keeping his treasure locked up; perhaps from an inkling of the designs that filled his pupil's brain. Better to have let him have his will for once; for when covetous lust takes root and flourishes in the human heart, it is not often allowed to perish for want of opportunity; and Sanfiero's craving to possess himself of his master's violin, was only permitted to grow strong enough and fierce enough to shrink from no means, fair or foul, to satisfy his desire.

He came to look upon the man who was his greatest benefactor as an enemy whom he must circumvent. Ofttimes when he saw the slender brown violin in the firm hold of her owner, he longed to throw himself upon him with all his puny strength and tear her from his breast. To what insanity of reckless fury his Italian temperament might have goaded him, had not his pent-

up desires found their outlet at last, it is impossible to surmise—but his time had come.

One Wednesday evening Christopher departed as usual—so Bambo thought—for the meeting of his club at the little tavern. The Italian boy hung about the stairs and halls, chafing under the deprivation of his favorite enjoyment. Repelled by the familiarity of the screaming and quarreling crowd of youngsters, of both sexes and all ages, that swarmed through the tenement, he soon skulked back to his own quarters. His mother was indulging in a neighborly visit in the street, and stifling as the room was, it gave the boy a sense of relief to shut the door behind him.

Aimlessly he entered his closet and threw himself on his bed, as was his custom. From force of habit his eyes wandered to the window over the foot of his couch. It was thence that he had first beheld the object of his longing. He raised himself mechanically, wondering why his memory should all at once revert so vividly to the evening of that day, when he had returned home, his toe

wounded by the heel of a strange child. The little handkerchief rested—a little crumpled, soiled bunch—in one corner of his dilapidated trunk. He had half a mind to get up and find it.

A hazy sense of having been foiled in his efforts at finding the girl, increased his general feeling of injury. How long ago it all seemed, and yet how vividly the occurrences of the memorable evening all at once appeared in his mind. Merely from an impulse of continuing the impression by repeating a former action, he climbed upon the stool to look into the next room. It was a position which he could not maintain long, for the stool had become still more rickety from usage, and he had to depend upon the support of his hands upon the window-sill. He threw but one glance into the room of the German, then fell back as if struck by an electric shock, for in that one glance he had seen the case of the Amati standing on the table !

For a few moments he lay as he had fallen ; quivering, panting ; the blood surging in his brain.

Had the German taken the instrument from its box and carried it to the club in his hand? That was unprecedented! And why should he do that? No! He must have decided to leave his violin at home that night.

The boy, shivering with excitement, gathered himself together. He burned to investigate, but he knew that Christopher always locked his room and carried the key with him when he went out. But wait! there was the window! The aperture was small, but then his body was slim and supple. Quick as thought he darted into the next room, looking into the hall to see if anyone were coming; then he closed the door carefully and ran back to his closet, where he shut himself in.

The soap-box was still under his bed; he pulled it out. The old trunk was piled on top of it; then the stool. Cautiously he tested the security of the support. It was but precarious, but he climbed upon it like a cat and found it easy to get upon the window-sill. He wriggled about and went through feet first. It was a tight squeeze, but he

succeeded and let himself down to the floor with a jump. How he was to get back never entered his calculations ; he was too intent, too intoxicated with hope and the fear of disappointment to think of anything but the violin-case on the table.

His lips pale and set, his olive skin livid, his knees shaking under him with eagerness, he approached it. His hands were on the cover—it yielded, opened, and—Mother of God !—there lay the object of his desire in her bed of purple velvet!

Bambo's eyes blazed. His fingers stretched out to seize her. Suddenly he arrested himself. Was it an impulse of compunction at the wrong he was about to commit ? Ah, no ! The German had taught him to come to his lessons with clean hands, and the boy's fingers still bore the stains of his day's labor. How dared he touch *her* with grimy hands ?

He flew to the washstand, in his haste spilling the water all around him ; while he kept his head turned over his shoulder, as in fear that the case would disappear if he left it out of sight.

Having dried himself carefully he returned to

the table. But a strange shyness stole over him. He stood before the open case, feasting his eyes on the brown glossy beauty—with the clear, golden sheen that distinguishes the genuine Amati—as a lover would look upon his adored in her slumber. At last, softly, timidly, his fingers stole near. He touched her! A thrill went through his nerves, but the contact emboldened him. With a quick motion he lifted the violin from the box. But still he held her reverently, at a distance, caressing with one slender brown hand the polished wood. Accidentally he touched the strings, and a faint, musical sound emanated from the instrument like a sigh.

The blood rushed to Bambo's face. Had she spoken to him? She was not displeased at his touch; did she mean to encourage him? He lifted her to his face and pressed his lips upon her, first gently, then with increased ardor. Gradually his excitement gave place to perfect calm. He felt happy, exquisitely happy. He had attained what he had wished for—no, not yet; not all! She must speak to him!

He put the violin into position and seized the bow. Caressingly he pressed his chin upon her, whispering half audible words of endearment and supplication. “Oh, Amati ! My beloved one, wilt thou speak to me ? Wilt thou sing to me now ? *Io t’amo ! Io t’amo.*”

His hand trembled again so that he could scarcely guide the bow. The first stroke produced a shrill, discordant shriek. Bambo nearly fainted ; beads of perspiration gathered on his pale brow. Had she expressed resentment ? Softly, tenderly, he tried again. The answer came like a moan, deep and hoarse !

A terrible pang of fear crept into the boy’s heart. What if he could *not* make her sing ? What if she utterly refused to yield her sweetness to him ; to any one but her master ?

She should ! She *should* ! He would compel her !

He sat down, trying to steady his nerves. He strove to remember all that Christopher had taught him—it was in vain ! Nothing but discord was awakened by his strokes ; and under his desperate

attempts, the violin shrieked and moaned as in bodily agony!

Cruel disenchantment lamed Bambo's arm at last. For a while he sat quite still, holding the violin listlessly as if stupefied by the throbbing pain in his head. Then a blind rage, like a demon, took possession of the boy. Hot tears gushed from his eyes. He sprang to his feet; he raved; he swore! Then, grasping the violin with both hands, he lifted her high above his head. With a cry like a wounded animal's, he dashed her to the ground, stamping upon her with both feet; grinding her into splinters, until she lay a shapeless mass, destroyed forever—murdered! Murdered by her lover!

Suddenly the key turned in the lock; the door opened. Christopher had returned! The boy faced him; they glared at each other.

The German aghast at what he saw; the boy defiant, contemptuous.

“Sanfiero! What have you done?”

“Ha! She would not sing for me; so I have killed her!”

Then the German's self-control gave way. Beside himself with rage, he pounced upon the boy. He beat him ; he choked him ; he threw him to the ground. The child was like a pigmy in the grasp of a giant. He offered no resistance, and lay where he fell ; his eyes closed, on his lips still the sneer, a dark stream of blood trickling from the corner of his mouth.

The sight struck the German with terror and recalled him to himself. Had he killed the lad? Heavenly Father! What a brute he was! How much worse his deed than that of the boy!

He lifted the little lifeless form and carried it to his own bed, clean and tidy, though rather coarse. He bathed the boy's head and chest with cold water. Then he fetched a little flask of brandy and infused a little of the liquor between the boy's clenched teeth, but though he could feel the weak flutter of the pulse, it was long before signs of returning life became stronger and the lad's heavy eyelids quivered and opened.

Then a great sob of thankfulness, like a prayer,

arose in the German's throat. He hastened to fetch the boy's mother, and went for a physician.

Waking from dull pain to the dim consciousness of having passed through some dire calamity, the little Italian looked into the careworn and anxious face of the German who was bending over him with mingled suspense and relief.

“Christopher!” murmured the lad faintly.

“Thanks be to God that thou knowest me again, my boy!” cried the German. “We have had a horribly close shave, both of us!”

But the pale lips of the boy closed as if from a spasm of sudden agony.

“Why did you not kill me quite? I wanted to die!” he muttered faintly.

“Hush, hush! Praised be the good God, who preserved me from being a murderer!”

“But I—I *am* a murderer!” moaned the lad, throwing up his thin yellow hands weakly, with a gesture of despair.

“Do not speak of it, Sanfiero! Never mention it again! Never breathe of the deed that cost us

so dear! We will bear it together, my boy, and try to heed the terrible lesson to govern our temper!"

This was the only time, for many years that the boy's misdeed was referred to directly between them, but the sinister experience created a bond that bound them thereafter with a remembrance like that of two shipwrecked mariners who had once been cast away upon the same rock.

Nursed back to life by his faithful friend, the Italian became an almost inseparable companion of the German, who had refused to give the boy over to his dark and cramped quarters, after he had looked upon them for the first time. He had insisted upon keeping him in his own bed, where, with the assistance of Bambo's mother, who never quite comprehended what had taken place, he tended the boy with untiring devotion. When at last he was fully restored, Christopher still would not listen to any talk of separation, and a compact was agreed upon finally, by which the boy was resigned almost absolutely to his keeping, while

the mother attended to their meals and mended their clothes ; for which the carpenter paid her a small weekly stipend, as a housekeeper.

Bambo's music lessons however were abandoned, and the violin that had served him for his first instruction was laid away out of sight. On the other hand, the German bent his best energies upon imparting to his *protégé* all he possessed himself of knowledge, besides initiating him into the requirements of his craft. He worked a little more industriously himself, and often employed the little Italian as his assistant when called upon in pursuance of his trade.

It was thus that Bambo gained his first introduction into the houses of the rich. Christopher was known as a skilled artisan and often was called upon to finish off the more delicate woodwork of a gentleman's mansion, or even mend a rare cabinet in a lady's parlor. The boy, who frequently accompanied him to lend a hand, stared at first, with undisguised admiration of the lavish display of wealth and extravagance. But the German, as has

been said, was a good deal of a philosopher and pointed out to him, in his simple, straightforward way, that, after all, wealth but increases one's necessities, often without satisfying the craving of heart and mind.

"When you have had *enough* to eat, what does it matter whether you have filled your stomach with bread or cake? The cake would be more likely to interfere with your sleep afterwards, or cause you the pangs of indigestion. I, for my part, do not envy them their gilt and varnish, which require such constant looking after and repairing."

There was nothing in his behavior toward his patrons that approached servility, though he was uniformly polite, and Bambo observed that he was treated in return, invariably, with the frank, American respect for a man's worth, whatever might be his calling.

The influence of the sturdy German upon the Italian boy was in every way a wholesome one, yet it could not extricate him from the brooding,

deep-seated dejection, into which the episode with the Amati had augmented his taciturn frame of mind. The loss he had inflicted upon his friend by the destruction of his favorite violin oppressed him with the sense of never-to-be-repaid obligation, and the memory of the calamity hung ever like a dark cloud over their familiar intercourse. With the jealous greed of a miser, the boy hoarded each piece of money that fell to his share, urged by a desperate hope, that, in some far-off time, he might accumulate enough to purchase a new instrument for his teacher, though he could never replace the old.

But again fate, with the apparent generosity that so often works to our own undoing, lent itself to further his design in a way of which Bambo had never dreamed ; and again it was the vision of the girl-stranger who had intertwined her memory with his destiny, that led to the fulfillment of his wishes.

It was on a pleasant spring morning that Bambo sauntered down the Fifth Avenue, carrying a box

of carpenter's tools, with which he was to betake himself to the mansion of a rich merchant, where Christopher was engaged in a job. The lad had nearly completed his twelfth year and was still slender, almost to emaciation. But his olive complexion bore a more healthful glow and he stepped out with the elastic stride of boyhood. A handsome little fellow he would have been but for the deep scowl that disfigured his face.

Drawn up to the carriage step, in front of an imposing dwelling, stood a dog-cart whose impatient steed was chafing against the restraint of the groom, who held it tightly by the bit. An elderly gentleman, stout, and somewhat unwieldy, was in the act of mounting, while a girl of perhaps ten or eleven years of age, was already seated, holding the reins in her little gloved hands.

Of a sudden the horse reared and plunged, throwing off the hold of the groom, and precipitating the gentleman back to the sidewalk by a lurch of the dog-cart. The girl screamed, but held on to the side of her seat. The reins had dropped from

her fingers. Bambo, his attention aroused by her cry, looked at her—*Santa Maria!* It was the girl Isabel!

The horse was dashing wildly up the avenue, distancing the elderly gentleman and the groom who strove to catch up with him. Like a flash the turnout was upon the Italian boy, but casting aside his tools, he flung himself upon the horse, grabbing him by the neck, and, by a lucky chance, getting hold of the reins. The steed champed and reared, lifting the boy bodily from the pavement in its efforts to get away from him. But Bambo held him with the clutch of frantic excitement, and in a few moments help was by his side. Then he gave one look at the girl who was now crying hysterically. He had been mistaken—it was not Isabel! and Bambo, with a stinging pain, fell in a faint upon the stones.

“Take him to my house, the brave little fellow,” the gentleman faltered, overcome with fright and relief. “He must be hurt! and he has saved my daughter’s life.”

When consciousness returned, with an agony of distress in his arm, Bambo found himself in the hands of a physician, stretched out on the silken cushions of a lounge, in a magnificent apartment. The stout gentleman was there, and several servants ; but no one whom the boy knew.

As soon as he manifested his return to life, the gentleman overwhelmed him with praises and thanks, but Bambo turned his head away and muttered,

“ It was not Isabel ! ”

“ Give him time ; he is a little confused yet naturally,” the doctor said. “ A dislocated shoulder is no joke to a little fellow like that. But he will be all right, shortly. He might have fared a good deal worse. Wait till he feels a little better, and we will ask him where he belongs and send him home.”

“ He shall not go until he wants to ! ” protested the gentleman, “ and I mean to reward him well for his bravery. Good Heaven ! but for him my only child might have been killed ! ”

But Bambo continued to show utter indifference to his position as a hero. He wanted to get to Christopher without further delay.

"He is waiting for the tools," he urged.

"He must come here and get them then; or I will send a man. You are not fit to carry them," the gentleman persisted. "The groom has gathered them up and they are safe; but you shall not go without reward. Is there nothing at all that you wish for?"

Then a sudden gleam came into the boy's eyes.

"Yes. I want a violin!"

"A violin? Bless my soul! You shall have the best one to be bought in New York! I will go with you myself, and buy you whatever you like."

"But it must be an old one; *very* old," explained Bambo eagerly. The old gentleman stared.

"Well, I don't know much about fiddles," he said. "My brother Josh, if he was alive now, he might help you to get a good one. He was always

a sort of crank on the subject. There's an old fiddle of his somewhere about the house now, that he set great store by. A Straddlevarious, he called it, I think."

Bambo arose excitedly, but the pain in his shoulder almost conquered him.

"Would you give me that one?" he asked between his teeth.

"Of course, my lad, if you want it; and I don't know but that it is a first-rate one, if you know how to handle it. Josh paid a heap of money for it, he told me; but it is yours and welcome. You Italian fellows, somehow, seem to belong to a fiddle."

Christopher had returned to his home perplexed by the failure of the boy to join him with the tools. Of the run-away on the avenue he had not heard anything. Finding the tools gone, he prepared to set out to look for the lad, when the door burst open and Bambo entered, his arm in a sling; pale as death, but radiant and with eyes blazing.

In his uninjured arm he hugged a big black violin case.

“Chris—Chris—Christopher!” he stammered.
“I have brought you a Straduarius! I give it to
you; it is yours!”

With that he threw himself into the German’s arms, and sobbed for very joy.

He was a changed lad from that day forth. The music lessons were resumed, and Bambo worked and played with a joyful energy that astonished and delighted his friend and teacher. With the intuition of genius, he supplemented the resources of his instructor from his own musical inspiration, and after a time, it became Christopher’s turn to listen with joy and admiration to the melodies produced by his pupil.

II.

HE was but a slender youth, this young musician, who stood so calmly, gracefully poised before the vast audience in the Academy of Music.

From the long, narrow slit between his half closed eye-lids his glance wandered, half triumphantly, half disdainfully, over the fashionable assemblage, that had gathered to listen to the strains of his violin.

When he lifted his bow, with the graceful wrist-motion of the expert violinist, the stir and flutter among the throng died away in respectful silence, and from the first note to the last vibrating chord, his hearers sat in hushed admiration, until at the close their enthusiasm found vent in a storm of applause, during which the young artist withdrew, with scarcely relaxed gravity of mien and a bow

that might have been awkward had his lithe, perfectly proportioned figure permitted of a gesture not pleasing in effect.

Many of his listeners perhaps heard him play for the first time, but, as Sanfiero's name had become prominent of late among the votaries of music, or those who affected to be such, they were with one accord ready to fall down and worship this new idol, this fashionable plaything, which society had set up for itself in its mad chase after new sensations.

A young barbarian he was, according to their creeds, but his utter want of conventional polish was set down by them as the excusable eccentricity of genius.

Scarce more than a lad in years was he, with a face of half-savage beauty, the down of early manhood accentuating the proudly curved outline of his upper lip. He carried his supple, slender form, with the assurance and firmness of perfect self-possession, which comes early to those who meet life and its complications in single combat.

"A mere lad," they called him, yet he could sway their jaded sensibilities to renewed energy of emotion by his marvellous playing, and awaken their lethargic imagination from its deadly inertia. The eyes of women, abnormally brilliant from the use of belladonna, would soften and veil themselves in unaccustomed moisture, and the sated languor of the "men of the world" re-kindled into glowing ardor, under the seductive strains that fell upon their ears.

But he, the young artist, regarded them meanwhile with his sphinx-like imperturbability. He met the extravagant laudations of his admirers with a shrug, half of remonstrance, half of distaste, and when the performance was over, he replaced his violin in its case, soberly but tenderly, and trudged homeward on foot, though many a seat on the swelling cushions of private equipages was proffered to carry him in triumph to scenes of festivity, where his presence would have been esteemed a crowning favor.

Indeed Sanfiero bade fair to reach the pinnacle

of fame at this early stage of his musical career ; a circumstance that caused him a sort of cynical wonder. He had reached his social eminence almost without an effort. Through the intercession of his friend, the German carpenter, he had been given a minor part in the orchestra of a small theatre. His playing had attracted the attention of the leader, and, step by step, he had risen to more prominent parts, until, at a private concert, for the benefit of the pet charity of a wealthy lady, he had captured the fancy of the patroness, who, rejoicing in the discovery of a new genius, had exerted her influence in his behalf.

Sanfiero, the young Italian violinist, became the fashion, and no *musicale* was considered perfect without a contribution from his bow. Engagements showered upon him. The prominent caterers to public amusement came forward with flattering and profitable offers, and Sanfiero with his characteristic grimace, half a frown, half a disdainful smile, permitted himself to be carried onward by the waves of public favor.

He was passionately fond of his art for its own sake. That it should become the means of enriching him was an unlooked-for result, and he put aside the money that flowed into his pocket, and continued his simple habits of life. He was not so proud, by far, of the flattering recognition which his musical as well as personal gifts obtained for him, as his old friend and patron, Christopher, the German carpenter; his friend and comrade still, in their mutual prosperity.

Sanfiero's mother had died years before, of a fever, but his loneliness had knitted the bond between him and the German the closer. Christopher had fallen heir to a moderate income which permitted him to spend his life in simple comfort and independence, and the two still lived together, though in rooms somewhat more commodious and in a better quarter of the city, than in the old days; still of a Bohemian simplicity that would have caused Sanfiero's fashionable patronesses to stare in dismay. And thither the young artist returned after his nightly triumphs, not unfrequently dis-

posed to grumble because his good fortune brought in its train much that annoyed the youth.

“What fools these women are!” he would moralize, throwing a crumpled *billet-doux* to Christopher, for the lighting of his pipe.

“Why can’t they confine themselves to business? I give them music; they pay. I am content, but they want more. They say silly things, and what is worse, they write them. What will they? I am not of them! They are moths with golden wings; but brush off the gold-dust, and nothing is left of them but soulless, insignificant creatures.”

Christopher looked at him with an indulgent chuckle.

“You are famous—and good-looking; that is what women like,” he would answer. “But you are young, very young yet. Most men would like it well enough. Why do you dislike them? It is not natural in one of your temperament to be so wise.”

“When I was a little lad they gathered their skirts away from my touch, and called me ‘a dirty

brat'—all but one.—Have I changed my skin?"

"No, but you keep it cleaner," grinned his friend.
"One cannot blame them so very much."

"The men are more sensible," Sanfiero continued. "They are civil enough, but they don't ask me to give them my heart, to make a plaything of it. I take their money, and I give them what they pay for; but they cannot buy my liberty. My life shall be my own."

"O well, my lad; go your own gait, your time will come, I doubt not." And the German enveloped himself in clouds of tobacco smoke, while he, who might have supped upon the delicacies of the season in Beauty's halls, partook of a luncheon of bread and cheese before retiring.

Christopher often continued oblivious of the flight of time long after Sanfiero had forgotten his grievances in the sound slumber of youth. Sending forth clouds of smoke he would follow their convolutions, and his speculative thoughts at the same time. He was proud of the boy, as he still loved to call him from old habit, though he well

knew that the passions of Sanfiero's southern temperament lay crouched for a sudden leap into manhood. Reflecting upon the manifold allurements of success and flattery that surrounded the youth, he felt afraid sometimes for his moral fortitude in the future.

But Sanfiero's safety lay in his love for his art ; in that and a mysterious influence that hung like a mist over his memory. The recollection of a face met in the long ago. Of this, however, he confided to his violin alone. It was to her that he imparted his secret dreams and aspirations, and from her he drew in return the siren's song of a hope which he could not have formulated in words.

Often when his listeners thrilled under the impassioned chords evoked by his bow, and the cheeks of women reddened from the quick pulsations of their heart-blood, while the glances of men flashed more boldly, Sanfiero, all forgetting, was but pouring forth this secret vehemence of an innermost longing that could find no other outlet. It was the longing for an ideal, which, search as he might,

had ever evaded him in the course of his existence.

Great ladies petted him ; exclusive aristocrats would fain have admitted him to the intimacy of their friendship. He was a genius, a prodigy ; above all,—he was the fashion ! And they would have prostrated themselves before their chosen idol had he permitted them. But at every new introduction to one in their ranks, after one swift, searching glance from his lustrous dark eyes, the heavy lids would veil again the smothered fire in their depths, and no effort of homage, no blandishment of beauty availed to draw more from him than a momentary smile that was barely courteous, while he returned the languishing glances of his admirers with an indifference that bordered upon impertinence.

But : “He is only a lad,” said the women. “What can he know of love ? Some day he will become a superb lover !”

And : “He is only a lad,” said the men. “He loves only his violin, and some day he will be her greatest master !”

“He is only a lad,” mused the German carpenter over his pipe, “and he loves music ; but some day he will love a woman, and he will love her madly !”

And then, with a sudden pang of apprehension, he remembered the Amati!

Meanwhile, Sanfiero thought little of the preferences shown him. With the sublime arrogance of genius he accepted them as a due tribute to his art.

“I am not of them,” he had said ; but with no sense of inferiority, but rather as a contemptuous disclaimer of the frivolity of their circle.

Raised from the gutter, one might say, uplifted and ennobled by the sublimity of genius high above his station in life, the advantages of culture and refinement seemed to him trivial and imaginary, because he could not understand them. He expected not much of life, beyond being fed and clothed and to have plenty of music—always music ; and in the end, perhaps, the fulfillment of that secret, devouring longing to look once more into

the face of his ideal ; the face that had ever pursued, though as persistently escaped him. As far back as he could remember, almost, this vague hope had lived within him.

And then—? There was nothing beyond that, for the present, that came within the radius of Sanfiero's imagination. But fate, cruel, inevitable, lay waiting ; biding its time to let the passions mature that lay dormant in the hot blood of the young Italian.

It was a gala-night at the Academy, and all the most pretentious, the most proud of wealth, of fame, of beauty had gathered to lend lustre to the occasion : a concert in support of a popular and patriotic purpose.

Sanfiero, as usual, the star of the evening, was to be heard in a composition of his own, rendered in public for the first time. In his customary attitude, half of indifference, half of self-conscious power, he stood facing the vast assemblage. From under their long sheltering lashes his fiery southern

eyes wandered slowly over the rows of fashionable men and women, who were waiting with flattering attention for his opening chords. In the boxes, conversation was hushed with more prompt deference to the artist than is usual, and fair women, resplendent of attire and glistening with gems on their bare arms and shoulders, leaned forward and fixed their opera-glasses upon the young musician.

This challenge of thousands of eyes did not disconcert him. No answering smile played about the proudly curved lips. Almost absently, his glances flew from face to face, with that singular *soupçon* of seeking some one, which had so often been observable in his manner. But suddenly Christopher, who was perched among the wings, unseen from the front of the house, saw the slender figure start and tremble. Sanfiero's dusky olive skin turned to waxen pallor. His eyes flashed wide open, shooting a scintillating glance into the box nearest to him. His lips moved as if to emit some rapid words, born of quick impulse—but, in a moment he controlled himself, lifting his violin

with a swift, graceful motion and drawing the bow across the strings.

Christopher, following Sanfiero's glance, strained forward and examined the occupants of the box, that had so electrified his young friend. But they were strangers to him, all but one, a gentleman well known about town, a rising merchant with a reputation for extraordinary business abilities, and a rapidly growing bank-account: a tall, slightly angular man with dark side-whiskers and hair already streaked with gray.

In the foreground of the box sat two ladies, one a stout middle-aged woman of haughty mien, in gorgeous apparel; fairly ablaze with diamonds. The other, more quietly though scarcely less richly attired, bore herself with the calm poise of an acknowledged leader in the ranks of wealth and fashion.

Between them, leaning back in her chair, as if to withdraw a little from her conspicuous position sat a young girl, very young, very pretty; the fair beauty of a child still blending with that of young

maidenhood. She was quite simply dressed in creamy white silk, and the clustering gold of her curls was her only adornment.

The milk and rose complexion of the tender, though slightly insipid countenance, seemed to deepen gradually into carmine under the flashing glance of the young musician, while her limpid blue eyes gazed back at him, half bashful, half startled, and the delicate rose-bud lips opened with questioning surprise.

But Christopher's puzzled conjectures in regard to the Italian's suddenly evinced emotion, were increased to absolute wonderment at the rush of melody that burst upon his ear like a cry of triumph or rejoicing. He scrutinized Sanfiero sharply, but the pale lids again concealed the fire of his dark orbs, and his agitation betrayed itself in the strains of his instrument alone.

The audience might regard it as a brilliant prelude, but Christopher knew too well that this was not a part of the composition, long familiar to him from many home rehearsals. He felt more and more

perplexed as the music continued. Odd snatches of melody these were, runs and trills as of rippling laughter; the chattering of merry child-voices, with here and there a staccato note, like a joyful shout.

What was the lad thinking about? the German asked himself uneasily. He recognized musical phrases now and then that he had often heard before when Sanfiero sat dreaming over his violin in the gloaming.

The listeners, unsuspecting that this was not the music prepared for their hearing, sat spellbound under the exquisite purity and sweetness of the cadences, though here and there a face looked puzzled as to their interpretation.

All at once the young musician dropped his bow, interrupting himself in a passage that was merging into confused sounds. His chin sank upon his breast and the hand holding the instrument dropped by his side listlessly, while his glance rested upon the floor. An awkward silence fell upon the house, then a stir, and murmur. What was amiss?

At this critical moment a friendly hand started the applause, and in an instant the audience followed the lead. What did they care if Sanfiero's conduct was inexplicable and eccentric? He was the fashionable favorite of the hour and his vagaries were to be excused, and even respected.

But the burst of acclamation aroused the artist from his untimely abstraction, and raising his hand deprecatingly, with regained self-control he stepped firmly into his usual posture and proceeded with the opening strains of the formally announced concerto.

Never had he played with more power; with more masterly beauty of touch and phrasing. Clear and pure and grand the notes swelled and flowed under his inspired touch, and as the melody rose and fell, the musician's face and form became transfigured as with inward fire. A glow of almost supernatural joy suffused the dusky pallor of his olive complexion; the lithe, graceful limbs seemed tense with suppressed energy, and Christopher saw the lightning-glance dart with a flash of triumph

now and again toward the box whence his inspiration seemed to flow.

At the finish the young composer who had thus added new laurels to his fame, was overwhelmed with enthusiastic demonstrations of approval. Sanfiero bowed low, and with a last parting inclination toward the box retired hastily behind the scenes.

His friends crowded around him ; musicians, dilettanti, men of fashion, messengers sent by fair ladies, with congratulations and invitations. Sanfiero withdrew from them all, as quickly as bare courtesy would permit, dragging Christopher away with him in his feverish haste to leave the house.

“What on earth is the matter with you? Who were the people in that box? Do you know the girl?” questioned the German as he breathlessly strove to keep by Sanfiero’s side, who, with flying steps, passed into the street where he summoned a cab, to escape the crowd outside. But the young Italian sank into a corner of the vehicle, leaving it

to Christopher to direct the driver to their home. A strange, new elation shone in his dark face, which somehow, his friend could not entirely interpret as triumph at his musical success.

But: "Later," was all the answer he could get; and Sanfiero evidently meant to keep his secret, for, when they had reached their destination and Christopher had opened the door with his latch-key, he did not follow him in.

"Do not sit up for me. I must have a walk before I can sleep," and ere his companion could remonstrate, or offer to accompany him, he had quite passed out of hearing. The German ascended to their rooms, grumbling uneasily at this new departure in the conduct of his young friend.

"What the deuce has got into the boy? I hope he has not fallen in love with that pretty doll in the box, in this sudden fashion; for he might as well cry for the moon!"

He lit his pipe and smoked deep into the night, but Sanfiero came not. He fell asleep where he sat and when at last he was aroused from his uneasy

position he observed that the dawn was creeping into the chamber and that the young musician had only just returned from his nocturnal ramble. But Christopher asked no more questions.

During the weeks that followed, Sanfiero retired into a dreamy mood, interrupted by spells of almost feverish excitement. Christopher watched him silently but intently. If the youth observed it, he gave no sign, but more likely he was entirely absorbed by the new impulse that had taken possession of him. More taciturn than ever, his faithful friend could gain his only clue to Sanfiero's varying moods from the strains of his violin, into which, as usual, he poured his innermost thoughts. And variable enough they became at last; now doubtful and uncertain, now joyous to triumph; and again, despondent, hopeless, despairing.

In Christopher dwelt the sympathetic understanding of his art. Though he rarely touched a bow now, he was too intimately acquainted with this instrument with the human voice, not to interpret its utterances intelligently. The youth

was devoured by the burning torments of passion, and it needed not words to convey this to Christopher, when the violin poured out his tale of doubt and hope and longing. It was a mystery, this suddenly unfolded romance, which seemed to have sprung into existence with a bound; still Christopher would not force his young friend's confidence and waited in silence.

With touching delicacy, tender as that of a woman, the burly German cared for his companion's comfort, attending to the duties of their little *ménage* entirely himself, that Sanfiero might follow the bent of his inclinations undisturbed. If the young musician returned from a concert or private *musicale* in elation of spirits, he met him with cheerful words of approval, and at times the youth seemed to bubble over, fairly, with light-heartedness and merriment, quite foreign to his former manner. But at other times he would come home downcast and dejected, and Christopher not seeming to notice, would move about quietly, and ask no questions about the evening's happening.

Thus it went on for many days. Sanfiero went out oftener at night and stayed later than had been his custom. He did not relate his daily experiences as of old, though Christopher knew that he went more into the home circle of his wealthy patrons, and frequented their entertainments when opportunity offered.

His friend missed the old confidence sadly, yet shrank as with a foreboding of coming evil, from the revelations he still awaited with hidden impatience. One evening, however, Sanfiero returned late, with a clouded brow and feverishly burning eyes, betraying so fierce a suffering of mental wretchedness that his aspect goaded Christopher into protest.

“No use trying to hide it any longer, my lad,” he urged, laying his hands kindly upon the shoulders of the youth as he stood looking out of the window, his back turned upon his friend. “Speak, and it will ease your mind. I know all about the ailment anyhow ; it’s the old story ! But who is she ?”

Sanfiero winced under his touch, but turned with

a flash of self-assertion, as if to cut off all remonstrances in advance.

“It is Isabel, the girl who stepped on my toe in the Square.” His voice was low, but firm.

Christopher looked at him for a moment, trying to understand; then the recollection of the Italian’s fruitless search, during the years of his boyhood, came to him. He had long ceased to think about it, as Sanfiero had not referred to the incident for a long time.

“You are sure of it?” he asked wonderingly, “and it was no Will-o’-the-wisp, as I used to think, that you have been chasing all these years? How did you recognize her?”

“I would have known her at once, in any place—and I did—among a thousand! She was the girl in that box, sitting between the two women.”

“And you have met her, and spoken to her since? Does she, too, remember the childish act that made such an enduring impression upon you?”

“I see her often,” Sanfiero answered with dark-

ening brow, “but never alone. I have not yet spoken to her, except with the violin; but I am sure that she understands me, for her eyes answer mine.”

“But, my dear boy, this is sheer folly! You recognize a girl in a crowd, whom you have met once, many years ago, when you were both children—granting that she is the same girl—and all at once, you give yourself over to a headlong passion, without even having spoken a word to her! What do you expect to come of it?”

Sanfiero looked down with a characteristic shrug of the shoulders; then, after a moment’s silence, he burst out, as if no longer able to restrain himself:

“I have always loved her! Child as I was, I gave her my heart and soul when she first looked into my eyes! I have never ceased to look for her. For what else did I let them drag me out of my privacy, these slaves of fashion, and try to make a puppet, a fool of me? I knew that sooner or later I should meet Isabel among them; for she

belongs to their class.” He stopped a moment for breath, then went on :

“ They have only just returned from abroad, she and her mother, to introduce Isabel to her world. They belong to an exclusive set, purse-proud and haughty. The mother, a widow, will not allow Isabel to go anywhere without her, unless it be with that tallow-faced banker ; and to-day I was told that she intends her to marry him ; though he began by courting the mother, for her wealth ; cold-blooded calculating machine that he is, though he has money enough of his own. It is talked about quite openly ; and also that Isabel will not listen to him—nay, that she detests him ! ”

Again Sanfiero stopped, pacing up and down the room with quick, agitated steps, not unlike a caged panther, in his lithe, savage grace of motion.

“ But he shall not have her,” beginning again with a sudden burst of passion. “ Let him beware ! She is mine ; she is the only woman on earth to me, and—mark you, Christopher ! —I have told her so, with my violin, and I *know* she understands ! I

shall make her love me! And then who can hinder us from being happy?"

He clenched his fist and was silent. The German gave him time to exhaust his excitement a little. He felt shaken by this volcanic outburst, though he had ever been conscious of the covered fierceness of disposition in the youth: a boy no longer now; a man to-day; matured, ripened, by the seething heat of passion; and Christopher felt terribly apprehensive of his future all at once.

"Sanfiero!" he appealed to him at last, "what can the end be?"

The young Italian stood still. His slender form seemed to grow and expand. He lifted his head proudly. Boldly his dark, luminous eyes returned the glance of his old friend.

"I shall marry her; of course," he answered, firmly.

"Don't be a fool, boy!" exclaimed Christopher in alarm. "Do you think they would let her, even if she were willing? You tell me that she is the daughter of a purse-proud aristocrat; a woman of

wealth and position. Do you imagine she will give her child to *you*, a poor Italian fiddler, who has nothing in the world but his violin ? ”

“ I have my art ! ” Sanfiero retorted, haughtily. “ I have reputation now ; I shall have fame, greatness, in the future ! ”

“ In the future : aye—God willing—but now ? What have you to offer her now ? ”

“ My love ! ” replied Sanfiero, his eyes blazing. He looked handsome, courageous, magnificent ; and Christopher’s secret opinion was that he might have a good chance with any woman who saw him thus. But he knew too well the impregnable obstacles prejudice would place in the young man’s way, from the moment his wooing became obvious to the guardians of his lady-love. Still it was not of them he spoke first.

“ And you think your love alone would suffice her ? Even if you could win to yourself this spoiled child of luxury, which she cannot help being, reared as she has been in her world—*her*

world, which of course is very different from yours."

"It *shall* suffice her! She will be loved, idolized, adored, as never woman was before! I will toil for her, slave for her, to make her life all that she could wish!"

"Aye, there speaks the sublime conceit of a lover! I know it will be wasted breath to reason with you, but, let me tell you, it must be a love as great as genius, that could grant you all that your demand implies. Sacrifice of all that she has been taught to hold dear; wealth, social position, early associations—nay, even, perhaps, her mother's love! all to link herself for life to an utter stranger; a stranger not only by accident, but also by nativity, tastes, training; by the thousand trifling differences of every-day habits. There have been such loves of women, we are told, but is she capable of it, this girl, whom you have set up as the idol of your heart's shrine?"

The young Italian looked at his friend, to whom

his fears lent eloquence, with startled attention. Christopher continued :

“ You say you have not even spoken to her in words. How do you know, that, in gaining your hearts’ desire, you will not discover in her, too late, the hollow puppet, you well know society is apt to fashion of its women ? You are ready to cast your heart, your soul, at her feet ; are you sure that your bauble is worth the purchase-money ? ”

With a gesture of offended, disdainful dismissal, Sanfiero turned away. “ You do not understand,” he muttered. But Christopher would not be silenced thus.

“ Very well,” he went on, “ we will grant, then, that she is all your fancy paints her ; that she is noble ; that she is true ; that she is worthy of a man’s utmost devotion ; are you sure of *yourself* and your power ? If you take her from her sphere, by force of your own passion, are you confident of inspiring in her its return, to the degree of making her renounce all the ties of her past ? And can you give her the lasting compensation, which she

cannot fail to need, throughout the life which she must spend with you, in circumstances so altered, so curtailed, compared with those to which she is accustomed ?

“ Love asks nothing but love in return,” persisted Sanfiero, though during his friend’s impressive argument, shadows of doubt began to flit through his expressive features.

“ Love in return ; perhaps yes, if one can at all times awaken the response. But what when you fail ? You both would suffer. Nay, my boy, do not protest ! It is not your love that I doubt. I have known you too long to think that your constancy could waver. But think of the difficulties you would have to conquer. You will have to learn and unlearn a million of trifles before you can hope to create the harmony which alone can make wedded life endurable.

“ And this girl, dainty and polished ; the artificial creation of a system which you hardly understand. Oh, Sanfiero ! ” he interrupted himself, carried away by impulse, “ remember the Amati ! ”

His voice broke ; he stretched his hand out imploringly to the young Italian.

The youth turned upon him, at the last appeal, as if he had been struck ; his face distorted with anguish. Their eyes met for a moment, then, covering his face with his arms, Sanfiero sank into a chair, groaning aloud.

Christopher, pale and scarcely less agitated, hesitated, then he laid his broad, honest hand tenderly upon the young man's bowed head.

"Forgive me," he pleaded, "I was cruel!"

Sanfiero looked up to him with sorrowful eyes.

"No, you are very wise!" he whispered ; and his old friend knew that their bond was newly cemented.

Sanfiero had said of Isabel that she understood his appeal, and he was not far from right in his assertion. At least his instantaneous devotion, his absolute surrender of himself from the first lightning glance, had flashed its meaning into her innocent young heart, with the magic interpretation which love knows how to convey in its darts.

But in his wooing there was not a trace of weakness ; it carried the force of a demand. A demand for recognition, for reward, for reciprocation ; and it was this that caused her great bewilderment.

What did he ask of her ? What could she give him ? Isabel was very young, but she had a clear enough understanding of her position in the world. An offspring of “society,” reared in its tenets, confirmed in its prejudices, she was quite conscious of the chasms that divide the human race into so many coteries of different degrees. She had first beheld the young artist crowned with the glory of his genius, surrounded by the enthusiastic applause of the world—her own world—but she was perfectly aware that in spite of their willingness to prostrate themselves before his triumph, Sanfiero in a dress-coat, was still, to them, Sanfiero, the man of the people. A musical genius they did not deny—but still : only an Italian fiddler !

The young girl had heard much of his utter indifference to the social preferences offered him, of his imperviousness to flattery, his insensibility

to beauty ! for, as the fashionable favorite of the hour, he was naturally the subject of much inquisitive discussion among her set ; therefore, his instantaneous, unmistakable homage was doubly gratifying and surprising to her. It had electrified her, as with the swift message : "It was for you I was waiting ! You have come : henceforth I am yours alone !"

At the first survey of his dark, proud face, with the curved red lips, and the heavy, drooping eyelids, she had experienced a dreamy feeling of familiarity, and with the sudden flash from his lustrous eyes came the vivid confirmation of recognition. And yet, where was it that they had met ? She could not place him in her memory, for the occurrence of the day when she had wounded his foot was buried under the flood of passing years.

Already she was well accustomed to the adulation of her circle, this little golden butterfly. Already the young heiress had had enough of love-making from the men of her set, to irritate or amuse her, according to circumstances, but San-

fiero's passionate though wordless appeal had touched her heart with its deeper romance. Wordless? Could words speak more plainly, more eloquently, than the entrancing singing of his violin? Did not each chord, each note, tell her of his love?

Isabel listened, yielded, responded, and gradually, irrevocably fell in love for the first time in her life.

They met often, still always separated by the gulf which etiquette prescribes between the performer and his audience; yet they were soon as united in mutual understanding as if no obstacle had intervened. The young girl gave herself up to the charm of his musical adoration without a thought of the future, and Sanfiero was content—for the present—so long as he could call that dreamy look of perfect accord to the eyes of his beloved.

Ere long, however, he was aroused from his trance of bliss; alarmed by the rumors whispered around him. Isabel's mother was planning a *mariage de*

convenience for her daughter, they told him, with the wealthy, middle-aged banker. Not for a moment did the thought of his beloved's connivance at such an arrangement enter his mind. He sprang at once to the defence of their love, endangered by interference, and the purpose ripened, to make Isabel all his own.

But how was he to approach her nearer? It was easy enough for him to gain admittance into the set in which she moved, by accepting the frequent invitations extended to him, by one or the other member of it, and so he met her not seldom, at suppers after the theatre or concert; at afternoon teas or musicales, and at the receptions where artists and the devotees of fashion mingled.

But Mrs. Ward-Hastings, Isabel's mother, counted herself as an exclusive of the exclusives. To her all art employed in the pursuance of a livelihood stamped the artist as a tradesman; and as such not to be tolerated as an intimate. She frowned upon the fad of society that extended a hand of fellowship to "such people," though she

was too indolent to oppose herself vigorously to the sway of popular whims. But she held herself and hers aloof from the familiar contact, as well as she could, without offending fashionable usage.

But at last the supreme moment came when the lovers stood face to face alone. Sanfiero pale with passion; Isabel rosy in the consciousness of the confession of her love, which every feature proclaimed. And there was no need now of wordy explanations between the two who had so long communed with eloquent glances and still more eloquent interpretations of soul-stirring melody!

“Isabel!”

“Sanfiero!”

All was told in the quick exchange of names; stormy and urgent from the young Italian, a mere frightened whisper from the girl. And then the world and its distinctions vanished from their consciousness, and their hands clasped in silent pledge and confirmation of their troth, as sacred and as binding as any spoken vows.

It was at a crowded reception, they met thus

unobserved; and the rooms were filled to suffocation. Sanfiero having seen his idol disappear from the throng with her escort, prepared to leave the house, when Isabel, emerging alone from an ante-room where a maid had repaired a slight damage to the young lady's toilet, met him at the head of a broad staircase. The place was adorned with feathery potted palms, and heavy brocade draperies veiled the adjoining doors. The lovers were not safe from sudden surprise, and Isabel nervously tried to escape from his detaining grasp after the first greeting. But he caught her to his heart for one blissful moment, and touched her cheek with his lips. And she yielded to his caress though the next instant she had fled, and, covered with blushes, disappeared from his enraptured gaze. Sanfiero carried with him, into the night air the certainty of his victory—as far as the young girl's heart was concerned.

After this he approached her boldly, when next they met in public, and despite the severe stare of disapproval from her mother, conversed with her a

little, on music and kindred subjects. He was so perfectly respectful, however, and the young lady so evidently constrained as she answered him in monosyllables, with downcast eyes, that the maternal vigilance relaxed, suspecting no danger.

There was not much opportunity for confidential intercourse in such momentary meetings, but ere long Sanfiero rested assured that he need not fear any rival.

It was of course inevitable that a devotion so obvious could not remain unnoticed long by the throng in which they moved. Smiles and glances were intercepted, and by-and-by whispered comments flew about among the fashionable friends of Isabel and her mother. Here and there a sneer, but thinly veiled by polite words, found utterance, and the men began to cast black looks upon the audacious musician and muttered about “the impudence of the fellow.”

Sanfiero heeded them not. It did not occur to him at all to consider himself their inferior. They had sought him, flattered him, courted him ; they

had urged upon him the hospitality of their homes ; their women had made love to him, had sued for his favor with encouraging smiles and words—nay, with written confessions ; and now, when he came to woo one of their rank honestly, manfully ; ready to lay life and soul at the feet of his chosen one, they turned their backs upon him, with derisive smiles and scarcely veiled contempt.

But what did their disapproval matter to him ? He knew that Isabel loved him ; that she would willingly be his ; and if they piled their hindrances in his way, ever so high, he would find means to circumvent them.

He was a youth of the people—and of a people with whom love is an imperative law. Fear he knew not ; diplomacy he despised, and he went to the mother of the woman of his choice, and frankly, earnestly demanded her hand in marriage.

It would be impossible to depict the lofty surprise, the insulting scorn, with which his petition was received and refused, by Mrs. Ward-Hastings. She called Sanfiero an impudent boy, whose only

excuse could be found in his extreme youth and ignorance. Her judgment was founded upon the slow development of the northern clime to which she owed her being, and, accustomed to reckon a man's age by its decades, she failed to recognize that within this slender youth burned the full-grown passion of a man.

She forbade him to approach, or otherwise address her daughter again. Isabel, she said, was fond of music, but she surely had not intentionally encouraged such presumption on the part of the musician, and she would not have her annoyed by further demonstration.

Sanfiero bowed with perfect self-control and assured her that he should do his best to win her daughter's consent.

The mother utterly refused to take this proposal of "this common fiddler" seriously. To her comprehension the player of the violin was but one of a band of strolling vagabonds; a little cleaner than some of them, and with an undeniably superior gift of pleasing the ear with his instrument, but

not for a moment, to be considered as “one of them.” This was the consequence of the folly of taking up these people, and making much of them, until their impertinence knew no bounds.

She dismissed the young musician from her presence and from her mind, as beneath serious consideration, and continued to attend his concerts, as if nothing had happened, contemptuously refusing to display any uneasiness on behalf of his future movements.

To Isabel she said nothing ; but the lover found means, in spite of the mother’s watchfulness, to convey to his beloved a fairly accurate understanding of what had taken place, and Mrs. Ward-Hastings observed with dismay the continued perversity of her daughter’s fancy. In her worldly wisdom she did not argue with the culprit, but prepared for a crushing manœuvre that was to put an end to the nonsense, once and for all.

She found it suddenly imperative for her health to make a prolonged pilgrimage to some European baths which her physician conveniently prescribed.

Cards were out for a farewell reception of the young heiress, Miss Hastings, previous to her departure for Europe, and perhaps no one in the "world" but the dismayed lovers, was sure of the motive that thus set the tide against them. Vainly Sanfiero, driven to distraction by the impending separation, tried to communicate with the young lady by word of mouth or in writing. His visits were denied, his letters intercepted. And still the elder lady met him in public with a frigid civility that set all rumors at naught.

But Mrs. Ward-Hastings, in the over-confidence of her vantage over-reached herself in her fancied security. The proud aristocrat, in her eagerness to refute all suspicions that her retreat was inspired by fear of this man of humble origin, whose only claim to admittance into her circle was by his violin, determined to prove to him, that she apprehended no danger from his presence.

On the programme provided for the entertainment of her guests was: "A violin recital by the celebrated young artist, Signor Sanfiero."

Sanfiero had accepted the challenge boldly ; nerv-
ing himself as for a decisive encounter. He felt
that he was to enter upon a contest, on this ominous
night, for the culmination of his boldest wishes,
or his utter, hopeless defeat. And he had laid
his plans accordingly.

As he stood before the guests of the evening he
betrayed no sign of his inner agitation. Appar-
ently calm and self-possessed, he stood in his old
poise, half indifferent, half haughty. But his
dusky, olive face showed no trace of color, and the
half-veiled eyes, black as midnight, sparkled with
the fever of hope and fear, and the determination
to win or lose *to-night* all that was at stake for
him.

“He cannot have cared much, after all,” thought
those who had before commented on his infatua-
tion ; the women with sighs, half of relief, half of
disappointment—for the world loves to look on at
a romance, albeit a tragedy—and the men with
complacent satisfaction.

“He was shrewd enough to see the absurdity of
8

his aspirations to the hand of the heiress, and the belle of the season. Now we shall have no more nonsense from him," they said, and they were inclined to reward him with redoubled condescension.

Sanfiero met their conciliating advances with his old, inscrutable manner that had ever formed a barrier to familiar intercourse between himself and his patrons. His proud reserve piqued their vanity, and they soon left him to his own devices.

But if this were to be his last opportunity of playing before the mistress of his heart, Sanfiero was doing his best to leave a lasting impression. Never had he played more divinely; and his listeners soon lost all thought save to give themselves up to the enjoyment of his masterly playing.

Like a living voice rose the melody of his superb instrument. Pure and yet penetrating like liquid fire, the chords swelled under his master-hand, thrilling and entrancing his audience into rapturous silence.

But the artist, as he played, was closely watching the object of his adoration from under his long, shading lashes, and the fever of his heart vibrated in the strings of his violin. If he could but make her understand his prayer! If he could but make her love him enough now, to count the world well lost in the shelter of his arms! If he could induce her to leave all, and follow him, and place herself in his keeping!

Isabel felt herself drawn toward him by the power of his passion, vaguely at first; but as the impassioned pleading, sweet and low as a lover's voice, touched her heart with its sadness and sorrow, the appeal penetrated her innermost soul with its meaning, and her pulses began to beat in answering throbs. Confused by the strength of her own stirred emotions she trembled twixt pain and delight.

Oh, what bliss would it be to listen to him forever! What would she not give to call herself his own! What was all the world compared with him, who held the key to such feelings as only

his music could awaken. He, a king! a demi-god!—

And her lover felt the struggle that swayed her soul, observed the tears that started slowly from her down-cast eyes, and as he saw them fall, his spirit rose in proud rejoicing. Quickly his instrument responded to his emotions. The violin stormed, entreated, commanded!

How eloquently spoke the strings! It was strange that not every one in that brilliant assemblage understood them as plainly as she did, thought Isabel, with a tremor of fear, as she shaded her face with her fan. But all were conscious only of the marvelous execution of a master-piece such as they had never listened to before, and when his bow dropped and he bowed low before them they arose with clamorous applause and importuned him for more.

And this was the all-important chance for which Sanfiero had been planning, and he paled still more, under the excitement of the approaching climax. The *encore* must be short and

decisive ; it must convey to Isabel distinctly what he would have her do. Heaven grant that she should know the words of his song !

He raised his supple, graceful figure to its full height, as he put his violin into position again. His deep, dark eyes, blazing with excitement, rested with intense supplication, that was yet a command, upon the face of the young girl, who gazed back at him as if fascinated by his glance. He cared not who saw him now, if Isabel would but fully understand him.

Bending slightly forward, he drew the bow over the strings, with a sound as of a deep-drawn sigh, then, quickly and with fire, he sped his message to her in Schumann's spirited music to the lines of Heine's "Tragedy : "

" Oh flee with me, and be my bride !
Close to my heart, thou safe shall rest,
Thy native land, thy father's house
To build anew upon my breast.

" Should we not flee, I here must die,
And leave thee, lonely, evermore,

Though shelter'd in thy father's house,
A wand'rer, as on foreign shore.

“ Then flee with me, and be my bride
Rest on my heart, and peace will come.
Far, far away, with me abide,
My heart thy native land and home !”

He stopped and stood in an attitude of absorbed suspense. In the dead silence the *ritardando* of the last line seemed to waver in the air. The conclusion appeared abrupt and his listeners evidently expected him to continue. But what had he or his future, to do with the ominous “second?”

His eyes were still fixed on Isabel, who was leaning back in her chair, toying nervously with the fan of white ostrich-plumes on her lap. The sheen of her golden curls glistening in the blaze of gas-jets framed her little patrician head like a halo. Her color varied from deepest rose hue to sudden pallor and back again with a rush of crimson. She felt the burning gaze of her lover fix her with consuming power, and slowly, under

its strained influence, she raised her head and looked him full in the face.

One rapid flash from eye to eye and he knew that she had received and understood his message.

“Come to me!” commanded his glance. And her answer flashed back: “I will come!”

It was but a moment, quick as an electric shock and unobserved by the closest watcher, but it sealed the doom of two human beings, swayed and controlled by that unfathomable power which fate extends over mortal kind under the name of love.

Sanfiero drew himself up, with a deep breath, and stepped back.

The audience, perceiving that he had really finished, broke into the usual applause, while they prepared to return to the conversation which had been suspended for the music. In the constant chase after the new, so many of the sweet old songs fall into disuse, that perhaps not more than half a dozen had recognized the strains, and those who, perchance, knew the words, probably failed to catch their significance, or, if they did, were too

polite to comment upon the audacity of the musician within the hearing of their hostess ; at any rate no warning reached the ears of Mrs. Ward-Hastings, triumphant in her consciousness of having outwitted the lovers.

Sanfiero, however, gave himself no concern in regard to the surmises of others. To him it was important only that his message should be conveyed to the object of his desire, for he knew full well that no other opportunity might be given him to plead his cause. And so much had depended upon what might have proved a futile hope, Isabel's knowledge of the little German "Lied." Sanfiero had trusted to chance, knowing that her musical education had been exceptionally thorough, and that she had studied for several years under German Professors at Stuttgart; not unlikely, therefore that she should be familiar with this little gem of Schumaun's. At any rate he had played his last trump, and won !

Radiant with the certainty of his triumph he mingled with the brilliant crowd, and Isabel, con-

fused and trembling with the consciousness of her surrender, watched his movements furtively. After a little he approached her, as she stood slightly withdrawn from the guests.

"Drop your fan," he whispered. Isabel obeyed. Sanfiero picked up the fan and when he handed it back to her, a slip of paper lay in its folds. He spoke a few sentence bowing deeply over her hand in apparent leave-taking, then he walked through the throng, head erect and with flashing eyes, saluting an acquaintance here and there as he made his way to the doors.

Mrs. Ward-Hastings drew a breath of relief when she saw him depart, and cast a searching glance upon her daughter. But she could not see the expression of her face, for Isabel seemed engaged in readjusting a knot of ribbon on her dress, which evidently absorbed her attention, and presently she walked toward a dressing-room carrying the ribbon in her hand.

Her mother smiled a smile of triumph. She had prevented the lovers from prolonged conversation

by many small strategies, and now there was no further cause for vigilance, and she could devote herself to her own amusement. To her the musical message had remained unintelligible.

Half an hour later a small figure, muffled in a long, dark cloak, slipped from the portal of the mansion and entered a carriage that stood in waiting. When its doors closed behind her, Isabel sank trembling into the arms of her lover, half fainting under his passionate caresses.

And so these two young souls, whom the world had set apart, went about working their own undoing. One with the selfish self-confidence of the man, to make or mar a woman's happiness ; the other with the sublime self-sacrifice of a woman's heart, leaving all, to do his bidding.

What are rank, position, wealth, when weighed in the balance against the imperative demand of love ? Man and woman are they, to whom its mandate goes forth ; man and woman, as God created them, and the dictates of the world and civilization are as naught against the arguments of human passion.

There was, of course, a great outcry of society, insulted by the daring stratagem of the young musician, when the elopement of the heiress with her low-born lover was noised abroad. It was as if he were stripped all at once of all the attributes of genius, which had so long compelled their homage.

Some nodded their heads with the relish of their fulfilled prognostications; for, had they not predicted that no good could come of it? It was a foolish thing—they had always thought it—to drag these upstarts from the gutter into the drawing-rooms. No wonder that they forgot their place!

A few were more charitable—not having been injured in their own pride or affections and were for forgiving the culprit and reinstating him into favor. But they were frowned down ; for it would never do to set so bad an example to the damsels to whom talent and personal beauty were but too often a disturbing element of rivalry, weighed against social distinction and the substantial inducements of a large bank-account.

And so they aired their opinions and their aggrieved sensibilities for awhile until a newer diversion—a dancer from a second-rate music-hall—quickly claimed their condescension, and, being a woman, this new fad was not so likely to cause a social upheaval; even if she did make the languid circulation of their male world course a little faster for a time. They were too—well, let us call it “wise,” to sacrifice more than a fraction of themselves and their love in her service.

But the woman whose final verdict was of the weightiest importance to the culpable couple, said little in her wrath, and utterly refused to listen to overtures of reconciliation. Nay, Mrs. Ward-Hastings virtually disowned her daughter, and turned a deaf ear to Isabel’s mingled appeals for forgiveness and assurances of perfect bliss in her union with her lover-husband.

The mother departed alone on her European tour; and so she and the rest of the world went their ways, leaving the newly-wedded lovers to the unraveling of their fate.

III.

“AND so the lovers lived happily forever after.” Ay, so the weavers of romance would have us think, when they have succeeded in guiding their hero and heroine safely through the intricacies of the proverbially rough path of true love to the culmination of their desires. And it is much safer to leave them there—for the romancers.

But stern reality compels us all to unravel the mysteries of our destiny mesh by mesh; to live our lives day by day; and as they follow each other, from light to darkness, and from darkness to light, to face each day anew, the consequences of our doing.

And after dreaming comes waking!

Isabel and Sanfiero dreamed their dream of love’s supreme delight; and to the woman first, came

the dawn that disturbed their slumbers. Sanfiero had carried his bride to an abode prepared for her, in a suite of furnished apartments. He had done his best, according to his limited understanding and resources, to surround her in her new home with some of the pomp and circumstance to which she was accustomed ; and to his simple tastes their dwelling-place appeared replete with luxury and even splendor.

His perceptions, not trained to critical discrimination, were not offended by cotton plush and Nottingham lace, and a chromo seemed quite as satisfactory a representation of nature as the finest oil painting.

In the beginning Isabel regarded all this with the indifference of perfect content with her choice. The situation had its charm of novelty, and, above all, the unrestricted companionship of the man with whom she was passionately in love, outweighed all disadvantages of her changed circumstances.

They went out to gay little dinners and suppers,

to out-of-the-way restaurants, where artists of all kinds were wont to congregate, and there they met many of Sanfiero's acquaintances, among whom he was an object of admiration and envy on account of his gift of genius, and also because of the social success which he had enjoyed. They welcomed the young bride in their free and easy Bohemian fashion and made much of her as the fair young wife of a rising genius, without much reference to her runaway marriage, of which they almost unanimously approved.

Only Christopher, her husband's oldest and most faithful friend, betrayed in her presence an unwonted shyness, a sort of deprecatory appeal, which Isabel could not understand. But she took a liking to the simple, rather awkward German from the first, and treated him with a charming mixture of encouraging condescension and trustfulness that touched Christopher deeply. Still he held himself in the background as much as possible, feeling far more keenly the incongruity of their relations than she did herself.

He could not free himself from anxious forebodings in regard to the young Italian's choice. Isabel was very fair and sweet; and she played with her newly found *rôle* as the queen of her husband's world, with evident enjoyment; but she was pre-eminently a woman of fashion, and if she should weary of caresses and the homage Sanfiero lavished upon her, would she be able to reciprocate the enduring, all-absorbing devotion he cherished for her? Was it probable that this little patrician, reared among a host of artificial but none the less potent prejudices, could find lasting contentment in a sphere that must be foreign to her in every particular?

For the present she adored her young artist-husband, and Sanfiero had many of the attributes that would capture a romantic maiden's fancy. He was handsome, with a dark southern beauty of coloring, and in his manner was a tinge of inscrutable reserve toward strangers that enhanced his fascination for those with whom he chose to be familiar. He was great as a musician, young as he

was ; a master of the most beguiling instrument ever fashioned by human hands. He was passionate as a lover, devoted as a husband, but——

Isabel had not discovered any “but” as yet. It dawned upon her very slowly, by very imperceptible stages, that there might be flaws in his perfection, according to the standard by which she had been taught to judge.) But Christopher was in the habit of looking far ahead; he held to the misgivings that had assailed him, when first Sanfiero had imparted to him the particulars of his love, and it was with painful solicitude that he watched the young couple.

Between lovers of unequal station, he philosophized, it must ever be a question of the dominant power to uplift or to drag down. And this tender, yielding little woman had so far betrayed more of the weakness than of the strength of love.

Sanfiero lived in a trance of utmost bliss. All the passion, all the ardent devotion of his fiery temperament lay prostrate at the feet of the woman who, for his sake, had abandoned mother, friends,

riches, and all that wealth can yield. His triumph was a delirium, a state of mental excitement in which all reasoning was impossible. According to his conception they had obtained all that love and life can bestow, and all that remained was to continue in this state of beatitude. That before them was the decisive battle still to be fought in which they must perish unless they could rise victoriously above almost overwhelming difficulties, never occurred to him any more than to his young wife in their transport of happiness.

They kept apart from the places where Isabel's former associates were to be met. Society had put on its severest frown and continued to prove its displeasure to the daring youth of genius who had carried one of its most brilliant ornaments into the intimacy of his private existence—his private existence of which it had no desire to know anything. And its wrath made itself manifest by the absolute unconcern with which the young musician was permitted to relapse into social obscurity.

Sanfiero paid no regard to his temporary eclipse.

He felt within him the power to conquer the recognition of the world through the greatness of his art. Alas, if he had but first learned the art of conquering his own passions!

It has been said that to Isabel first came the dawn of disenchantment, not that she became conscious of it all at once. Gradually, very gradually, crept into her mind a misgiving that she had not found Sanfiero all her imagination had painted him.

In his personality her young husband bore a greater charm than most of the perfumed dandies of her former circle, but his natural grace of bearing was marred occasionally by a certain roughness, or rather a lack of polish, that jarred upon her sensibilities. Isabel had been reared among men well-trained in refined deportment, by no means intrinsically superior to the simplicity of honest manhood, it is true, but none the less soothing, nay, almost indispensable to those accustomed to it from their earliest childhood.

In the rapturous moments of ecstatic love it was

natural for these two lovers of unequal birth, to forget the incongruities of their habits and education, but during the hours and days of familiar intercourse, amid the prosaic requirements of every-day life, Isabel could not fail to become aware of the wide chasm of social inequality that yawned between her and her husband ; a chasm which only a strong and noble love could bridge ; not love born of the senses which craves only possession of its idol, but love unselfish in its bestowal, ready to condone faults, to overlook shortcomings, to hold out a hand of fellowship in mutual endeavor of uplifting one another above conventional creeds, to the harmony of perfect understanding. It was upon this, the “perfect love that casteth out fear” that the future happiness of Sanfiero and his bride depended.

That the woman was first to start from her dream, was but natural under the circumstances ; for it was Isabel, whose conditions of life were most unfavorably changed. Sanfiero felt in the very privilege of intimate association with her, the

glamour and reflection of a higher social atmosphere than that in which he was accustomed to live. In her very personality Isabel brought him the indefinite perfume of a more delicate and refined existence.

Her dainty manner and fastidious tastes charmed his senses like a delightful poem ; but he could not realize that her very fastidiousness might cause her to detect faults ; to feel repelled by careless habits, whose very existence within himself he did not realize, and which he would have regarded as trifles. But is not our whole life colored by such trifles ?

Sanfiero was frugal by natural taste and early training. His everyday clothing was plain and of common cut. Though scrupulously clean in his person—thanks to the gospel of soap and water inculcated under the guardianship of the German carpenter—he was ignorant of the many minute requirements which appear indispensable to the toilet of a gentleman of leisure and cultured tastes.

Furthermore, the young girl had been rigidly

trained to social observances upon which the youth had ever looked with a democratic contempt as superfluous and artificial. To his young wife it might have been impossible to point out just where he fell short, but she felt in his manner the want of that indefinite air, which comes only from long familiarity with refined surroundings, and which is commonly supposed to distinguish the gentleman.

Isabel had ever met him in public clothed in the nimbus of his art, but she discovered with dismay, that in some way he lacked in his individuality the superiority with which, in addition to his musical attributes, her imagination had invested him.

Though not of an especially intellectual type, she had been accustomed to conversation on subjects of the most varied import, but in this she found so little responsiveness in her young husband, that she was at a loss, sometimes, for topics of mutual interest unless it were on his ever dominant love for music where they never failed to come to

a harmonious understanding. From the first, his greatest fascination for her had lain in his music, and still all fears, all doubts, all tremors of disenchantment would die away when he touched the violin.

When they were alone she constantly importuned him to play for her, as with an insatiable desire to renew the old intoxication of mind produced by the strains of his instrument ; and Sanfiero, rejoicing in her sympathy with his beloved art, failed to perceive the underlying craving of his young wife to keep alive her passionate admiration for himself.

“ Play for me ! ” she urged when they returned from their restaurant dinner, where, after the novelty had worn off, Isabel’s sensitive taste often shrank from the vulgarity of her surroundings.

“ Play for me ! ” she demanded, when in her unpretentious rooms the contrast of their pinchbeck adornments with her former home forced itself upon her observation.

“ Play for me ! ” she begged, when her young

husband would fain have spent the hours in lavishing caresses on his bride.

Under the magic tones of his violin, while leaning against his knee, her cheeks would flush with pleasure, and with rekindled ardor she would reward him with the kisses he demanded. But at other times she would shrink from his touch when he suddenly drew her to his breast; and once when he had been to call upon Christopher in their old lodgings, she actually repulsed him with a shudder.

“ You smell of bad tobacco ; and I don’t know what else ! ” she expostulated, defending herself.

But to Sanfiero came with the pain of a sudden knife-thrust, the first piercing doubt ! Isabel, his wife, had pushed him from her—she was growing weary of his love ! He could no longer make her respond to him at all times !

Good God, the pain of that first, lurid flash of discovery ! He followed her every movement, after that, with a fearful watchfulness. He grew timid of approaching her, for fear of seeing her shrink from him again. He could see that he could

move her with his music, as of old, that she never failed to yield and soften toward him under its influence, but a sort of bitter jealousy poisoned even his love for music, and he disdained to use it as a decoy.

“It is the music she loves; not myself!” he mused angrily; and he eyed his violin with jealous dislike.

Once he besought her in a storm of passion, to tell him wherein he failed to satisfy her fancy; but the young wife, frightened and embarrassed, evaded him. Isabel was what is called “well-bred,” she could not tell her husband that she thought him “not a gentleman.” But she grew more and more subdued in spirits and would sit for hours listlessly by the window, watching the passers-by on the street, or dreaming over a book without ever turning its pages.

She would not acknowledge even to herself, that she was desperately homesick, perhaps she did not know that this was at the bottom of her heartache. But Sanfiero divined it, and could find no better

explanation for this most natural manifestation on her part, than that she was tired of him and regretted the step she had taken.

What she needed was soothing and cheering, and the staunch support of a man stronger and wiser than herself. How could he give her this support, he, this hot-headed son of the South?

Sanfiero was strong only in his emotions, and wise—not at all. He could not read the impulses of her heart, it was like a sealed book to him, and the only key to open it seemed to be his bow.

In despair he would take refuge in his music, and when the dulcet plaintive sounds sank into Isabel's understanding she would throw herself into his arms dissolved in tears, and beg him to forgive her and to have patience; and poor Sanfiero, half broken-hearted, shut his violin in its case and left the house. He could not have done worse!

Although he visited them but rarely and never stayed long, Christopher soon discovered for himself that something was amiss, and his fears took new alarm. He watched anxiously for the least

hint from Sanfiero, upon which he might open the subject and give him the benefit of his counsel.

But Sanfiero with his characteristic reserve, withdrew within himself with his troubles, and rather than seek his old friend's advice, he seemed to shrink from his companionship.

"They are too much alone," cogitated the German. "They are both moping for want of the excitement of the life which came to such a sudden end for them. 'Tis human nature!"

And on this ground he approached the young Italian at last.

"Atwater, of the Metropolitan, asked after you the other day," he said. "They are looking for some one to fill a course of afternoon concerts. What do you mean to do? It is not well that you permit the world to forget you!"

But Sanfiero shrugged his shoulders for an answer.

"But you have more responsibilities now," urged his friend. "One must make money to live well, and your dainty little bird requires a gilded cage."

“Why do you call it a cage?” Sanfiero faced him with an outburst of his old temper. “Can love be caged? If she did not love me, what good would it do me to ornament the home that would still be but a prison, ‘a cage,’ as you call it!”

Christopher arose and stood before him, fixing his clear blue eyes upon the excited face of the young Italian.

“Tut, tut! What folly is this, my lad?” he said sternly, though kindly. “Tell me what greater proof can you require of your wife’s entire love for you, than that she has forsaken all that was hers, to come to you?”

“What if she were sorry for it?” muttered Sanfiero, casting down his eyes.

“I do not believe it! You must not expect her to go about with constant protestations, and if she looks dull at times, it is because you keep her shut up too much. You cannot ask of her to live on love alone. Too much sweet cloys the taste!”

"It is not myself, it is the music she loves!" Sanfiero shot out impulsively.

"Of course she does," assented the German cheerfully, disregarding the first part of the remark, "and you are fortunate in being able to give her the best; but there are other things besides that you must give her. Take her to the places she has been accustomed to. What have you to be ashamed of? Show her older friends that you know how to take care of her, and do not let her mope at home! It will cost money, and therefore, I say, come forward and take your place in the ranks of art! Remember that you have a position to make, for her as well as for yourself. You will not find it too difficult, with your talent, only come out boldly! You must work, work for money and fame that she may be proud of the husband of her choice."

"Ah, Christopher!" The poor fellow gave way to his confidence in his old friend, "that is what I fear! That she will *not* be proud, nay, that she will be ashamed, that she will regret——"

His voice failed him, but he looked at Christopher with eyes so full of unspeakable misery that it went to the German's heart like a stab.

"Surely you are tormenting yourself without cause, my lad," he said soothingly, dropping into the paternal manner of the old days. "Why should such thoughts enter your mind? One cannot always live in a state of exaltation, and if your wife shows herself a little weary of love-making, give her a trifle less of it, and she will soon ask for more. Follow my advice; take up your work in earnest and she will rejoice in your success."

Sanfiero shook his head obstinately. "I want her to love me for myself," he persisted.

"Love cannot be coerced, it must be won," protested Christopher, then added with impatience: "But what nonsense is this! You *did* win her love; it is surely yours! It is for you to cherish and keep alive the affection she so freely gave you. You must study to please her. A woman, like a violin, is a fine instrument, and it requires careful

and constant practice to extract its sweetness, and if you should fail——” He stopped himself in the midst of his simile, aghast at the thought, whither it was leading him. Too late ! Sanfiero also, felt its application.

“ Ay, she is an Amati ! ” he faltered, his face twitching with agony. “ God help me, if I fail to touch the right chords ! ”

He would listen to no further arguments or comfort, refusing to yield to Christopher’s urging to take up his profession anew.

“ I could not play in public now,” he answered with decision. “ I am not equal to it ! ” And so he took his leave.

A fatality of circumstances seemed to pursue him : on his way home within a block of where he dwelt, he came upon a man, whose very existence he had forgotten until then. It was the banker, who had formerly sued for Isabel’s hand, the intimate friend of her mother. He passed the musician without apparent recognition, absorbed in his own thoughts. Sanfiero stood still and looked after him. A new, dull throb was added to his anguish.

Where had the man been? What was he doing in this unfashionable neighborhood? Could it be that he knew where Isabel lived, and that he had come to seek her out? What if he had found her already? If he had spoken to her? Would she have told him that she was not happy?

He turned toward his home, almost running, in his eagerness to verify his surmises.

Jealousy in its grosser form did not pollute his mind. He never for an instant feared that Isabel would bestow upon his former rival, a feeling warmer than friendly regard. But it was the terror that seized him, that this man might succeed in enticing her back to her mother's home, where she would be forever lost to him, her husband, who had carried her thence in his arms. A furious hatred of the banker arose in him; and a reproachful mistrust of his young wife, that she might have complained to him.

It needed but a glance at Isabel, and he knew that his fears were in a measure justified. The enemy had been there! For why else should he

find Isabel standing in the middle of the room, palpitating with agitation, her cheeks glowing, her eyes still glistening with the moisture of recently shed tears?

Sanfiero groaned. He went to a sofa and threw himself on its cushions, face downward. In a moment he felt his wife beside him. She flung her arms around him tenderly; but it was he who recoiled now.

“What is the matter, Sanfiero? Are you ill?”
He shook his head.

“Then why do you act so strangely? I want so much to tell you something. You cannot guess who has been here!”

How joyful was her tone! It cut him to the quick. He pushed her from him, and sat up.

“I met him on the street,” he said between his teeth, looking at her with great, reproachful eyes.

She looked puzzled and a little offended.

“I cannot understand why you behave so singularly; I was so glad, and thought you would be pleased also.”

“Why should I be pleased? Is his condescension, or whatever it is, such a joyful event?”

“Oh, but can’t you see what it may lead to? Mamma sent him! She has just returned from Europe, and she may forgive us, and then all will be well!”

“Will it?” questioned Sanfiero sadly, regarding her mournfully as she stood transfigured with the hope with which he could not sympathize.

“O Isabel! Do not let them rob me of you!” he burst out, seizing her in his arms with the passion of despair. “I shall go mad if you leave me! It will kill me!”

“You hurt me, Sanfiero,” she gasped in his convulsive grip. “Oh! how rough you are!”

He let her go at once, devouring her with burning eyes. At last his pale, despairing face touched her with pity.

“You poor, foolish boy!” she murmured drawing near again. “How can you talk so? Of course I shall never leave you; never, never! but, oh, I have longed so to see mamma once more! You

must not forget that she is my mother, and that I was never separated from her before I married you. And I think she wants me quite as much as I want her ! Only she will not say so yet. She sent Mr. Barbour to see if I were happy, he said, and, of course, I told him that I am happy indeed, because I love you, but that I wanted to see mamma very much. And when I do, I shall plead for you and convince her that you are such a dear noble-hearted fellow—if you are a bear sometimes—that she cannot help forgiving you ; and loving you besides ! ”

She chattered on excitedly and happily, interspersing her talk with tender little pats and caresses. How the event had changed her, from the pale, despondent woman of the last weeks to a radiant, hopeful young creature !

Sanfiero listened to her in silence, but she could awaken in his heart no echo of her sanguine hopes ; only dull, foreboding throbs of pain.

Ay, they could make her sing with joy, while he could only draw sighs from her ! he thought bitterly.

She flitted about her rooms in eager impatience during the following days; changing and rearranging the furniture and ornaments; sending Sanfiero for flowers and fruit, and evidently expecting, momentarily, to hear her mother's knock at the door.

They were days of silent torture to her husband. If she were so eager merely to see her mother, how easy it would be to persuade her to return to her altogether, he reflected; and he felt powerless to prevent her. He could not bear to watch her, as the days went by and the mother gave no further sign. The joy died out of Isabel's face, and doubt and anxiety lurked in her troubled eyes.

"She may come to-morrow," she would say with a deep sigh, after a day spent in futile waiting.

"She may come to-day," she would reiterate hopefully on the next morning, and set to work to make her home as attractive as possible.

Her lover-husband went nearly mad between his fears and his love, and his sorrow at her disappointment.

He could find no words to comfort her. Once, in sheer desperation he suggested: "Why do you not go to her?"

But the young wife lifted her head proudly, though sadly.

"No, she must seek me in my husband's home!"

Sanfiero felt in her words an assurance of her fealty, yet he dared not rely on them. His fears scourged him like a thousand demons, until he fled from the presence of the woman whose love seemed to be slipping away from him, while he felt utterly at a loss how to reclaim it.

Isabel could not fathom his feelings. She had never sounded the depth of his all-absorbing love for her, and saw only that he avoided her of late, without realizing that he was moved by a delicate fear of intruding his own claims upon her, in her distress at the continued delay in the coming of her mother.

The conflicting causes of his suffering—pitying her keen disappointment and yet dreading the result of a meeting between Isabel and her mother

—she could not comprehend, because it never entered her mind that he should really believe that she would leave him under any circumstances. In her child-like, hopeful way, she saw the future bright before them ; for all that seemed wanting to her happiness now was her mother's forgiveness and blessing—all the rest would follow. Sanfiero restored to social favor, would soon lose the trifling *gaucheries* that marred his deportment.

She sat alone in her room, one afternoon ; waiting, as usual, for the footsteps that would bring her mother to her. More than a week had elapsed since the banker's call, and, at times, Isabel's impatience grew into a fever. Its morbid glow was now upon her tender cheek as she sat wistfully watching the street from the window, the golden head bowed upon the little white hand.

She was so young, so childlike still, in her appearance. Her simple white gown, dainty and lace trimmed, enhanced the look of purity that was suffused in her whole aspect. It was most pitiful to see her sit and watch there. Sanfiero,

unable to support the sight, had left her with a lingering kiss, and had gone out,—but fate knows no pity!

At last the suspense grew insupportable to her also, and she arose and moved about the room. Then under a sudden impulse, she fetched her cloak and bonnet; she would just get a breath of fresh air, and be back in a moment. But wait; she must pen a line to her husband, in case he should return and miss her. This would do:

“MY DEAREST BOY:

“If you do not find me when you return, do not be vexed. Mother has—”

Hark! some one knocked! Isabel jumped with a quick throb of the heart to open the door.
“Mother—”

The word rose to her lips and died there. Alas, it was only the servant with a letter; a cruel, fateful letter, but Isabel looked upon the familiar writing of the address with glad anticipation. She pressed it to her lips; for was it not the writing of her mother? This would explain why

she had so long delayed her coming. Perhaps she had been ill.

Isabel settled herself in her arm-chair, smoothing out the paper with caressing touches.

“ My dear daughter : ”—How delightful it looked ! Isabel repeated it aloud : “ My dear daughter : ”

Perhaps but a conventional beginning, yet how sweet the words fell into her homesick heart ! Yet could a mother say less ?

Isabel read on, and a strange look came into her face ; wonder, apprehension, anger. These were not the tender words of reconciliation and pardon —a pardon which would include her husband as well—which she had expected. Words of censure they were, as directed to an offender, who had reaped the fruit of her wrong-doing and was ready to repent ; and what promise of forgiveness was held out, was on conditions painful to her love and pride.

Petrified with dismay, Isabel read the letter many times over before she fully comprehended it.

“Mr. Barbour tells me that he found you in tawdry lodgings, unfit to live in, for a lady of your station.”

Isabel looked about her with wide open eyes. A blush of mortification spreading over her face. So that was how her home had impressed him ! The blush deepened as her glance flew critically from object to object. Never before had she felt so keenly the difference between them and the luxury of her former surroundings ; and that this man had observed and condemned them before her mother, stung her with bitter humiliation. Alas ! what availed it that these very chairs and hangings had been the witnesses of the bliss of her first wedded days ? Isabel could only look upon them, henceforth, with shrinking distaste !

Not even to herself, would she acknowledge, however, such an effect.

“Surely he has exaggerated,” she murmured. “True, the furnishing is not costly or beautiful, but certainly, everything is quite respectable !” What next ?

"As I foretold, he reports that you are miserable in looks and spirit, and that you deeply regret the mortification you caused me, by your headstrong and disgraceful conduct."

This was terrible! What could she have said, that he should have gathered such an admission from her words? She had been greatly excited, moved beyond self-control, by the unexpected visit from a near friend of her mother, and her homesick heart had surprised her into a confession of yearning for her, but she could not believe that she had given the man cause to think that she was not entirely happy in the love of her husband, or that she regretted having married him. And worse and worse:

"It was only to be expected that your eyes would soon be opened to the irreconcilable disparity existing between you and this low, vulgar fiddler."

How Isabel's face burned at the insult! How dared she call him that! No, there is a limit even to the privilege of an incensed parent, and her

mother should beg her and Sanfiero's pardon for that !

In a similar strain the letter continued, pointing out that only utter wretchedness could be the result, if Isabel remained with her husband ; and counseling her to leave him at once and return to her maternal home. Only by such a course could she hope for her mother's pardon, and reinstatement in her favor.

“ Once with your natural protectors again,” said the letter, “ it will be easy for you to get a divorce ; for the fellow has little means, and will probably be glad to relinquish his claims upon you for a good, round sum of money.”

Oh merciful Heaven ! What language to direct to his wife ! Offer Sanfiero money to release her ? How his splendid eyes would flash with scorn at such a suggestion ! How her mother erred in the estimation of his character. *She* was vulgar in her valuation of the man's worth ; yet what could Isabel do to convince her of the falsity of her judg-

ment? She would not even dare to mention to Sanfiero the proposition made to her.

Isabel crumpled the letter in her hand and let it fall. All her hopeful plans lay shattered and she felt crushed and helpless in the dilemma in which her mother's demand had placed her. Leave Sanfiero? Her beloved; her heart's idol? What would life be, without him?

For the first time, with tenderest longing, her love swept over her in overwhelming force—love for Sanfiero *the man*, not only the musician!

What if all the world were against him? She would cling to him the closer! It was true, they had not been entirely happy lately; there were many discrepancies that had made themselves felt; but they would doubtless adjust themselves if Sanfiero were but given the opportunity of associating intimately with the class to which she belonged. If only her mother could be brought to give him the trial, he would speedily become as one of them.

The young wife paced up and down the room in nervous agitation. "If he would only come

home," she thought, longing to consult with him. He had left her too much alone, of late, she protested mentally, was he growing tired of her? Was there some truth in her mother's prediction that no good could come of their union? A growing dread of the future crept into her mind. Would they, as the days went by, become more and more estranged? Was, indeed, the difference in their birth and training an insurmountable barrier to perfect understanding? And the happiness, the perfect bliss of the past, was it only an ephemeral illusion? How could they drag out the rest of their lives, in vain regret, side by side, if their love should die? No, no, no! A thousand times better would be death than such a life!

Isabel began to feel frightened at her own thoughts. She tried to pray: "Dear God! Rather let us die together now, than suffer such cruel estrangement!"

How would her prayer be answered?

The hours had slipped by and day faded into twilight. Sanfiero came not,

Worn out with fatigue and strong emotions, Isabel flung herself on the sofa, bursting into hysterical tears, until she sobbed herself to sleep, while the darkness closed in around her.

Sanfiero returned ; heavy of heart, haggard of eye ; with a dull, throbbing ache in his brain. He had spent the afternoon wandering about the streets, and felt worn out with sorrow. The darkness of the room touched him unpleasantly as he entered, but he heard Isabel's heavy breathing and knew that she had fallen asleep. Softly he struck a light.

His first glance fell upon her cloak and hat. She had been out then ? On the table lay the sheet of note-paper addressed to him. He read the lines. No, she had only meant to go, and changed her mind ; evidently. He wondered why.

He tiptoed to the lounge where she lay, and looked at her tenderly.

“ Poor little girl, tired out with vain waiting for her mother ! ” he thought. Her sweet face was flushed and troubled, her breathing was still pain-

ful and irregular. He looked closer—yes, those were tear stains upon her cheeks; she must have been crying bitterly. Crying! His Isabel, his darling, his idol! The poor fellow's face twitched.

Perhaps she had been lonely. He wished he had stayed at home to keep her company; but she had not seemed to want him. Could it be that her mother had been there—a sudden dread seized him—and that their interview had not been all that Isabel had hoped? Just then he espied the crumpled letter upon the floor; he pounced upon it—would that explain?

There is an unwritten law, it is said, Sanfiero, that to read another's letter, without permission, must always bring evil consequences!

Sanfiero would probably have scorned the superstition, had he ever heard of it; and even the law of etiquette, the sacredness of private correspondence had no weight with him. The letter was open; it was addressed to his wife. Why should he not be at liberty to read it?

Would Heaven but give her the chance to wake
and let him read with her arms about him!

Isabel slept.

Cruel and deadly the words sank into his overwrought brain until it reeled. From their tone he took it for granted that Isabel, his wife had indeed expressed her repentance of her marriage to him ; had poured into the ears of her visitor a tale of disappointment and contrition.

Poor Isabel ! He cannot read her loyalty in her sleeping face, still wet with the tell-tale tears !

Sanfiero looked down upon her, his features distorted with the anguish of his soul. He ground his teeth to keep himself from groaning aloud.

Ah, he had failed to win her love ! He had torn her from her mother's bosom and enthroned her as his heart's idol, but he lacked the skill to play upon her heartstrings so that they would vibrate in answering accord ! And if she did not love him, how could he ask her to stay with him ? Would it not be cruel to force her ? Ought he not to let her go back to the home she had deserted

for his sake? And was it not plain that Isabel so wished? When she had penned that note to him, had she not meant to follow her mother's command and leave him forever? Her heart had failed her, perhaps, and she had waited to bid him good-bye!

He flung up his hands, and let the cruel letter drop. The cry of his breaking heart rose to his lips—alas, that it did not ring out aloud and wake Isabel from her deadly sleep!

Sanfiero felt sick and faint. He walked to the table to pour out a glass of water. Isabel had arranged some flowers and fruit there, for her mother's refreshment, and the table looked fresh and inviting; the crystal dishes and the little pearl-handled fruit knives glittered. Everything bore the impress of her dainty taste.

Oh, how could he give her up; the light of his life, nay, the very spring of life to him now?

He had to steady himself against the table; the very room seemed to turn and whirl about him. What could he say to her, if she should wake now, and ask him to bid her farewell, proclaiming her-

self ready to leave him desolate ? What could life be when she had gone ? Life without Isabel ! It would be hell ! hell !

Hotly seethed the fierce passions of his nature ; up surged the blood from his heart to his brain. No ! no ! no ! She should not leave him ; she was his ! His alone, in life or death !

With a cry like that of an animal at bay, he seized one of the knives among the fruit, and with the quickness of a panther leaped back and flung himself upon his sleeping wife.

Not a sound escaped her lips ; only a scarcely audible sigh, and a quick flutter of the eyelids ; and Isabel lay still as if her slumber were undisturbed, while the red life blood welled up among the lace upon her bosom.

Sanfiero, with bloodshot, sightless eyes, fell upon the floor beside her.

.

All that day, Christopher had felt strangely uneasy. He had seen nothing of Sanfiero for over

a week. His frame of mind at their last meeting, as well as the unfortunate turn their conversation had taken, filled him with a nervous dread unusual to him.

"I must look the boy up," he muttered, getting himself into his Sunday coat, in deference to the bride.

He knocked repeatedly at the door of Sanfiero's apartment—the servant having sent him up as usual, saying both his friends were at home. He could see the light shine through the keyhole, but not a sound was audible within. Perhaps they had gone into the next room, he thought, trying to reason away the singular fear that oppressed him.

He knocked louder; still no answer. He descended again, calling the maid.

"I am sure they are in," she said. "I took the lady a letter, and Mr. Sanfiero came home a couple of hours ago."

She went up with him, and after a knock, opened the door of the parlor.

“A caller, Missus”—with a shriek she turned, and fled past Christopher, down the stairs. What had she seen?

Christopher pressed forward. In the blazing gaslight, he saw Sanfiero stretched on the floor, and on the sofa lay Isabel, her white gown saturated with dark red blood.

“For God’s sake! Sanfiero, what has happened?”

At his cry Sanfiero raised himself, staggering to his feet, and stood swaying back and forth; meeting Christopher’s horror-stricken eyes with a vacant smile.

“You were right, Christopher,” he stammered, brokenly, “*Furono Amati*; but I could not make them sing for me, so I have killed them both!”

He clutched convulsively at his breast, with both hands, staggered backward and fell upon the corpse of his wife. Christopher sprang forward to catch him, and lifted him up in his strong arms: he was dead!

THE END.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00014810134

